

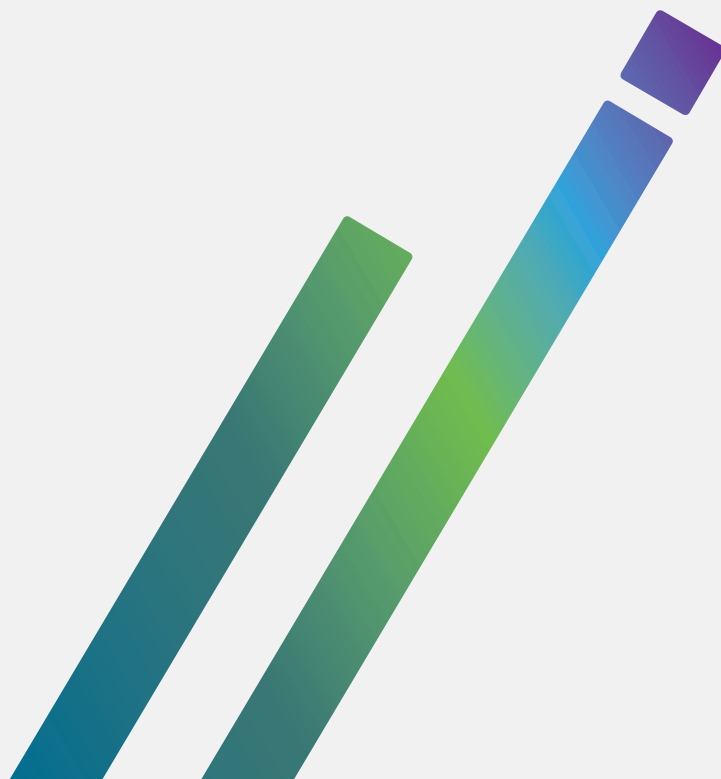


Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare



Child protection Australia 2017–18



AIHW



Australian Government

**Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare**

CHILD WELFARE SERIES

Number 70

Child protection Australia

2017–18

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Canberra

Cat. no. CWS 65

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This publication is part of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's child welfare series. A complete list of the Institute's publications is available from the Institute's website www.aihw.gov.au.

ISSN 2205-5037 (PDF)

ISSN 1320-081X (Print)

ISBN 978-1-76054-502-4 (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-76054-503-1 (Print)

Suggested citation

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Child protection Australia: 2017–18.
Child welfare series no. 70. Cat. no. CWS 65. Canberra: AIHW.

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Published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

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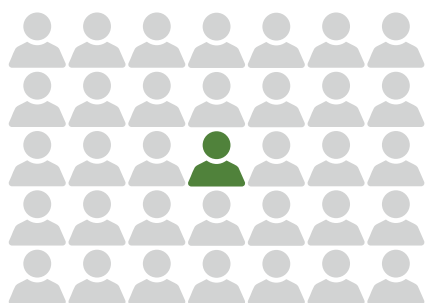
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Summary

This report presents statistics on state and territory child protection and family support services, and selected characteristics of children receiving these services. These include statistics for 2017–18, and trends over the 5-year period from 2013–14 to 2017–18.

One in 35 children received child protection services



In 2017–18, about 159,000 children aged 0–17 received child protection services (an investigation, care and protection order or out-of-home care placement). 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%) of children were involved in all 3 components of the system.

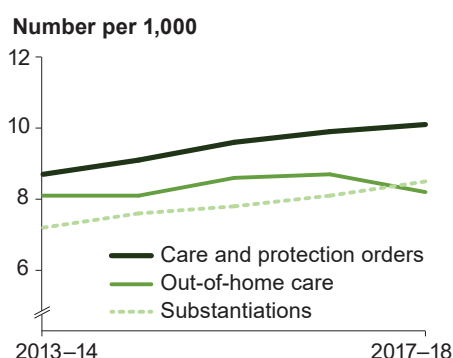
Nearly three quarters (72%) of children receiving child protection services were repeat clients—that is, the children had been the subject of an investigation, care and protection order, and/or out-of-home care placement in a previous financial year.

Indigenous children are over-represented



In 2017–18, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receiving child protection services was 163.8 per 1,000 Indigenous children, 8 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (19.7 per 1,000).

Rates for children receiving child protection services continue to rise



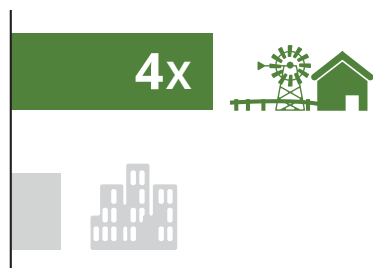
Between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the rates per 1,000 children rose:

- from 7.2 to 8.5 for those who were the subjects of substantiations
- from 8.7 to 10.1 for those on care and protection orders
- from 8.1 to 8.2 for those in out-of-home care (for more information on the comparability of out-of-home care data over time, see Box 1.2).

Emotional abuse is the most common type of abuse or neglect

Emotional abuse (59%) was the most common type of abuse or neglect that was substantiated through investigations. This was followed by neglect (17%), physical abuse (15%), and sexual abuse (9%). Girls (11%) were more likely to be the subject of substantiated sexual abuse than boys (7%), while boys had slightly higher percentages of substantiations for neglect and physical abuse.

Children from remote areas had the highest rates of substantiations



Children from *Very remote* areas had the highest rates of substantiations (26.1 per 1,000 children) and were 4 times as likely as children from *Major cities* (7.0 per 1,000) to be the subject of a substantiation.

Half of the children in relative/kinship placements were with grandparents



Half (50%) of children in relative/kinship placements were living with their grandparents, while 23% were placed with an aunt or uncle, and 16% were placed with a non-familial relationship carer.

Of the Indigenous children in out-of-home care, most (65%) were placed with Indigenous relatives/kin, other Indigenous caregivers, or in Indigenous residential care.

About 31,800 children had been in out-of-home care for 2 years or more



At 30 June 2018, of the approximately 31,800 children in long-term (2 years or more) out-of-home care, 73% were under the long-term legal responsibility of the state or territory.

Another 11% of children lived with a third-party carer who had long term legal responsibility for the child.

Of the children in long-term out-of-home care, 2 in 5 (40%) were Indigenous.

1 Introduction

1.1 Child protection overview

In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for statutory child protection. 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 or protection.

Children and young people are those aged under 18. This includes unborn children in jurisdictions where they are covered under the child protection legislation.

Several government and non-government organisations share a common duty of care towards the protection of children and young people. Departments responsible for child protection investigate, process, and oversee the management of child protection cases. Children and their families are assisted by being provided with, or referred to, a wide variety of services.

The national recurrent spending on child protection and out-of-home care services was \$4.8 billion in 2017–18, a real increase of \$463 million (11%) from 2016–17. This continues a pattern of increased spending over the past 5-year periods, averaging an annual increase of \$268 million between 2012–13 and 2017–18 (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2019).

Child protection processes

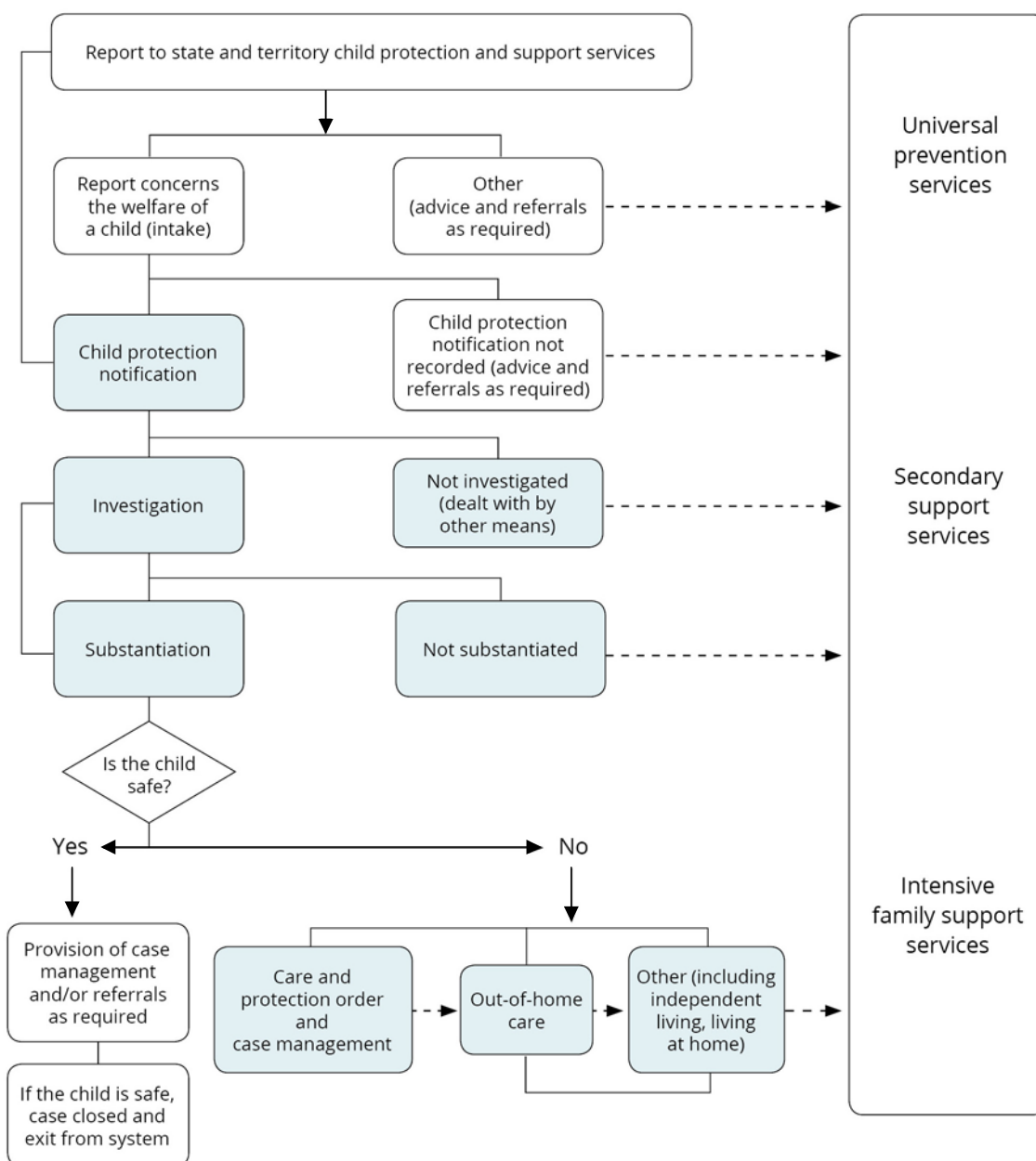
Across Australia, the broad processes in child protection systems are similar. A simplified version of the main processes is shown in Figure 1.1, and described in more detail in Box 1.1.

Children in need of protection can come into contact with departments responsible for child protection through various avenues. Reports of concern about a child can be made by community members, professionals (for example, police, school personnel, or health practitioners), the children themselves, their parent(s), or another relative. These reports might relate to abuse and neglect, or to broader family concerns, such as economic problems or social isolation.

Child protection intake services screen incoming reports to determine whether further action is required. The defined threshold for further action varies across jurisdictions, and this can lead to jurisdictional differences in the responses taken to initial reports. Reports that are deemed to require further action are generally classified as either a 'family support issue' or a 'child protection notification'.

Reports classified as requiring family support are further reviewed, and might be referred to support services. The National Child Protection Data Collection does not include those reports that are not classified as child protection notifications.

Figure 1.1: Child protection process in Australia



Notes

1. Shaded boxes are items for which data are collected nationally.
2. Dashed lines indicate that clients might or might not receive these services, depending on need, service availability, and client willingness to participate in what are voluntary services.
3. Support services referred to in the box on the right include family preservation and reunification services provided by government departments responsible for child protection, and other agencies. Children and families move in and out of these services and the statutory child protection system, and might also be in the statutory child protection system while receiving support services.

Box 1.1: Child protection statutory processes

Notifications, investigations, and substantiations

Child protection notifications are assessed to determine whether an investigation is required, whether referral to support services is more appropriate, or whether no further protective action is necessary.

An investigation aims to obtain more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification, and to determine whether the notification is 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated'.

A substantiation indicates there is sufficient reason (after an investigation) to believe the child has been, is being, or is likely to be, abused, neglected, or otherwise harmed. The relevant department will then attempt to ensure the safety of the child or children through an appropriate level of continued involvement, including providing support services to the child and family.

Care and protection orders

In situations where further intervention is required, the department may apply to the relevant court to place the child on a care and protection order. Court is usually a last resort—for example, where the family is unable to provide safe care, where other avenues for resolving the situation have been exhausted, or where the extended family is unable to provide safe alternatives for care of children. The level of departmental involvement that a care and protection order mandates will vary depending on the type of order (see Box 4.1).

Out-of-home care

Some children are placed in out-of-home care because they were the subject of a child protection substantiation, and they need a more protective environment. Children may also be placed in out-of-home care when their parents are incapable of providing adequate care for them, or when alternative accommodation is needed during times of family conflict. But there are no national data available on the reasons children are placed in out-of-home care (see Box 5.1 for the national categories of out-of-home care).

Out-of-home care is considered an intervention of last resort, with the current emphasis being to keep children with their families wherever possible.

When children need to be placed in out-of-home care, an attempt is made to subsequently reunite children with their families. If it is necessary to remove a child from their family, placement within the wider family or community is preferred. This is particularly the case with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (see Section 5.2, particularly Box 5.4).

Family support services

Family support services include programs that:

- seek to prevent family dysfunction and child maltreatment occurring
- provide treatment, support, and advice to families
- offer more intensive programs to assist the most vulnerable families (COAG 2009).

Family support services may be used instead of, or as a complementary service to, a statutory child protection response, and might include developing parenting and household skills, therapeutic care, and family reunification services.

Chapter 7 presents selected information about a subset of family support services—intensive support services.

Child protection policies and practices

Child protection policies and practices are under continual development in each jurisdiction. There has been an increasing national focus on early intervention and family support services to help prevent families entering or re-entering the child protection system, and minimise the need for more intrusive interventions (AIFS: Bromfield & Holzer 2008; DSS 2018).

Most jurisdictions have enacted strategies that try to help families in a more holistic way, by coordinating service delivery, and providing better access to different types of child and family services (COAG 2014).

Jurisdictional policy context

Although the processes that each jurisdiction uses to protect children are broadly similar (Figure 1.1), some important differences between jurisdictions' child protection policies and practices should be taken into account when making cross-jurisdiction comparisons.

Key differences across jurisdictional policy are briefly discussed in this section. Further details about each jurisdiction's policy and practice are described in Appendixes C–E (online) www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material.

Mandatory reporting

Commonwealth and jurisdiction-specific legislation governs the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. However, there is variation regarding who is legally obliged to report it to the appropriate authority. Further details about mandatory reporting are available online www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/child-protection/child-protection-legislation-by-jurisdiction.

Notifications, investigations, and substantiations

The policies for assessing child protection notifications vary broadly across jurisdictions. This might result in more notifications being recorded in jurisdictions where all reports are recorded as notifications ('caller-defined') than in those where the initial report is considered a notification only when the information received suggests that a child needs care or protection ('agency-defined').

Between initial reports and substantiation, various activities take place that are broadly categorised as investigations.

In jurisdictions where a preliminary assessment has occurred, activities tend to assess risk of significant harm, and focus on formal investigation.

In jurisdictions where all initial contacts are recorded as notifications, a preliminary assessment will often occur to determine the need for formal investigation. A formal investigation takes place if it is concluded that a child might have been, or is, at risk of harm. Formal investigation, as conducted in each jurisdiction, will determine whether the notification has been substantiated.

Thresholds for what is substantiated vary—some jurisdictions substantiate the harm, or risk of harm, to the child, and others substantiate actions by parents, or incidents that might cause harm. In considering harm to the child, the focus of the child protection systems in many jurisdictions has shifted away from the actions of parents to the outcomes for the child.

As well as policy variation at the jurisdictional level, the definition of what constitutes child abuse and neglect has broadened at a national level over time (AIFS: Holzer & Bromfield 2008). These changes affect the comparability of data included in this report across jurisdictions and over

time. The differences in legislation, policy, and definition between jurisdictions, and detailed information on recent policy and practices changes are outlined in Appendixes C–E (online) www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material.

Out-of-home care

The scope of national out-of-home care reporting has been subject to substantial national data comparability issues, due to variations in jurisdictional legislation, policy, and practice.

The key differences between jurisdictions are the inclusion or exclusion of children on third-party parental responsibility orders, children on immigration orders, young people aged 18 and over, and children in pre-adoptive placements.

The difference in legislation, policy, and definition between jurisdictions, and detailed information on recent policy and practices changes are outlined in Appendixes C–E (online) www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material.

The AIHW is working with all state and territory governments to improve the consistency of future national out-of-home care reporting.

National policy context

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 is a long-term approach aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children. The National Framework is composed of a series of 3-year action plans, with the first three Action Plans delivering many key achievements, including the appointment of the National Children's Commissioner, the development of National Standards for out-of-home care, and the delivery of projects to improve service responses for families and promote better understanding of child wellbeing.

The Fourth Action Plan 2018–2020 was officially launched on 30 January 2019. The four priorities of the plan are:

- improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems
- improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment
- improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent care options
- improving organisations' and governments' ability to keep children and young people safe from abuse (DSS 2018).

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse concluded on 15 December 2017, and Volume 12 of its final report provides comprehensive coverage of responses to sexual abuse in contemporary out-of-home care settings (from 1990 onwards).

Children in out-of-home care are highly vulnerable to sexual abuse, as separation from their family of origin and instability of placements can leave them feeling isolated, and lacking established relationships with trusted adults.

Potential perpetrators might take advantage of the opportunities for regular, unsupervised, private interactions with children in out-of-home care, or exploit the close relationships that develop between carers and children under their care (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2016).

More than 30 of the Royal Commissions' recommendations suggest changes to various aspects of the out-of-home care system to help better protect vulnerable children from sexual abuse while in care.

The AIHW is working with the Australian and state/territory governments to progress recommendations related to national child protection data collection and reporting, including:

- developing nationally agreed key terms and definitions of child sexual abuse for the purpose of national data collection and reporting
- improving the Child Protection National Minimum Dataset (CP NMDS) to:
 - better identify children with a disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
 - include information about children who were the subject of a substantiation for sexual abuse while in out-of-home care, and characteristics about them, and the type of abuse.

Some jurisdictions include cases of alleged abuse in out-of-home care in the data they provide on the number of notifications, investigations, and substantiations; see Appendix C in Appendixes C–E (online) www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material. But these cases cannot currently be separately identified in the national data.

Permanency reforms and early intervention

In August 2017, Community Services Ministers of the Australian and state and territory governments agreed to focus efforts in:

- providing stability for children in child protection
- ensuring the right services are available to prevent children entering child protection.

Ministers agreed to improve early intervention investment for children and families, through a joint investment and evaluation approach.

Ministers also committed to reducing state guardianship of children in out-of-home care, by securing permanency outcomes for children who cannot be safely reunified with their families within a reasonable time (Seselja 2017).

The AIHW is working with the Australian and state/territory governments to develop national reporting on permanency planning and culturally appropriate placements for Indigenous children.

1.2 Child protection data components

Data sources

National child protection data

The state and territory departments and the AIHW jointly fund the annual collation, analysis and publication of child protection data. Data in this report are largely drawn from the CP NMDS, implemented for reporting from 2012–13. The CP NMDS consists of several unit record (child-level) files, extracted from state and territory child protection administrative data sets according to nationally agreed definitions and technical specifications.

Metadata for the CP NMDS are available on METeOR, the AIHW's online metadata repository, and can be accessed at <http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/656494>.

A data quality statement for the CP NMDS is also available at meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/711622.

Data for these components are based on unit record-level data for all jurisdictions except New South Wales (where data are based on aggregate data, using the method predating the CP NMDS). Other jurisdictions also supplied data in aggregate format for tables where unit record data were not available. This includes all data about the use of intensive family support services for all jurisdictions.

National child protection data are analysed and published annually in:

- *Child protection Australia* (this report)
- annual reports to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on progress in implementing the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 (COAG 2012, 2013, 2014; DSS 2015a)
- online National Framework indicators, available at www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/nfpac/
- the Productivity Commission's *Report on government services 2019* (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2019). For all jurisdictions except New South Wales, most data reported for 2017–18 in the *Report on government services 2019* were produced from the CP NMDS. Data for New South Wales were based on aggregate data that this jurisdiction supplied to the Productivity Commission. Some data included in this report might not match data reported in the *Report on government services*, due to retrospective updates to state/territory data, and differences in the data extraction and analysis methods.

Scope and limitations of the CP NMDS

National child protection data are based on those cases reported to departments responsible for child protection, so are likely to understate the true prevalence of child abuse and neglect across Australia.

Further, notifications made to other organisations, such as the police or non-government welfare agencies, are included only if these notifications were also referred to departments responsible for child protection.

For child-based counts in this report, children are counted only once in the relevant table, regardless of the number of contacts the child had with the component of child protection being reported. For example, if a child was the subject of more than 1 substantiation during the reporting period, they are counted only once in tables reporting the number of children in substantiations. But there might be some small level of double-counting, due to movement between jurisdictions.

This report

This report presents information on state and territory child protection and support services, and some of the characteristics of the children who receive these services, as well as information on carers and intensive family support services.

Data produced from the CP NMDS based on nationally agreed specifications might not match state and territory figures published elsewhere, and might not be comparable with data for previous years.

Box 1.2 summarises data limitations specific to this report.

Box 1.2: Data limitations in this report

From 2017–18, New South Wales have revised the definition of an ‘investigation’ to include only field assessments, with all office-based assessments included as ‘dealt with by other means’. Tables related to children receiving child protection services and investigations should be interpreted with care.

In addition, New South Wales implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and has provided limited data. Data on the following measures were either unavailable or only limited data were provided:

- Substantiation data, including associated characteristics of children subject to a substantiation
- New or repeat clients
- Notification and investigation outcomes (limited data)
- Care and protection orders issued
- Breakdown of orders by short-term and long-term orders (limited data)
- Carer households.

New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.

From 2017–18, Victoria excluded children on third-party parental responsibility orders from national out-of-home care reporting. This aligns with New South Wales (in 2014–15) and Western Australia (in 2015–16), who excluded children on third-party orders in earlier years.

Work is ongoing to improve the comparability of out-of-home care for future reporting. For Victoria, this exclusion has resulted in a fall in the reported number of children in out-of-home care, and a rise in the reported number of children discharged from out-of-home care in 2017–18.

See Appendixes C–E (online) www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material for more information on the scope of out-of-home care across jurisdictions.

For 2017–18, Tasmanian Indigenous status is no longer being cross-checked with data from other databases. As a result, the proportion of clients with an ‘unknown’ Indigenous status is larger than in previous years. This affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status. Data for Tasmania have been excluded from these analyses (unless otherwise specified).

In the Australian Capital Territory, new or repeat client information has been unavailable since 2016–17.

Given these limitations, time series analyses in this report are carefully presented, with appropriate caveats. Data presented in this report should not be compared directly with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

The supplementary data tables referred to in this report (those with a prefix of S), are available to download from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/data>.

Technical notes for some analyses used in this report are available in Appendix B. Appendixes C–E (online) www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material contain additional information on legislation, policy, data systems, data comparability, and inquiries across jurisdictions of relevance to child protection reporting.

2 Children receiving child protection services

In this report, children receiving child protection services are defined as those children who, in the reporting period, were:

- the subject of an investigation of a notification, and/or
- on a care and protection order, and/or
- in out-of-home care.

2.1 Child protection services received

In 2017–18, about 159,000 (1 in 35) children received child protection services (Figure 2.1), a rate of 28.7 per 1,000 children aged 0–17.

Of children receiving child protection services in 2017–18:

- 105,000 were the subject of an investigation (19.0 per 1,000)
- 67,200 were on a care and protection order (12.2 per 1,000)
- 55,300 were in out-of-home care (10.0 per 1,000).

These rates varied across jurisdictions (Table 2.1). The key differences that can affect these data are outlined in Appendix C (online) at www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material.

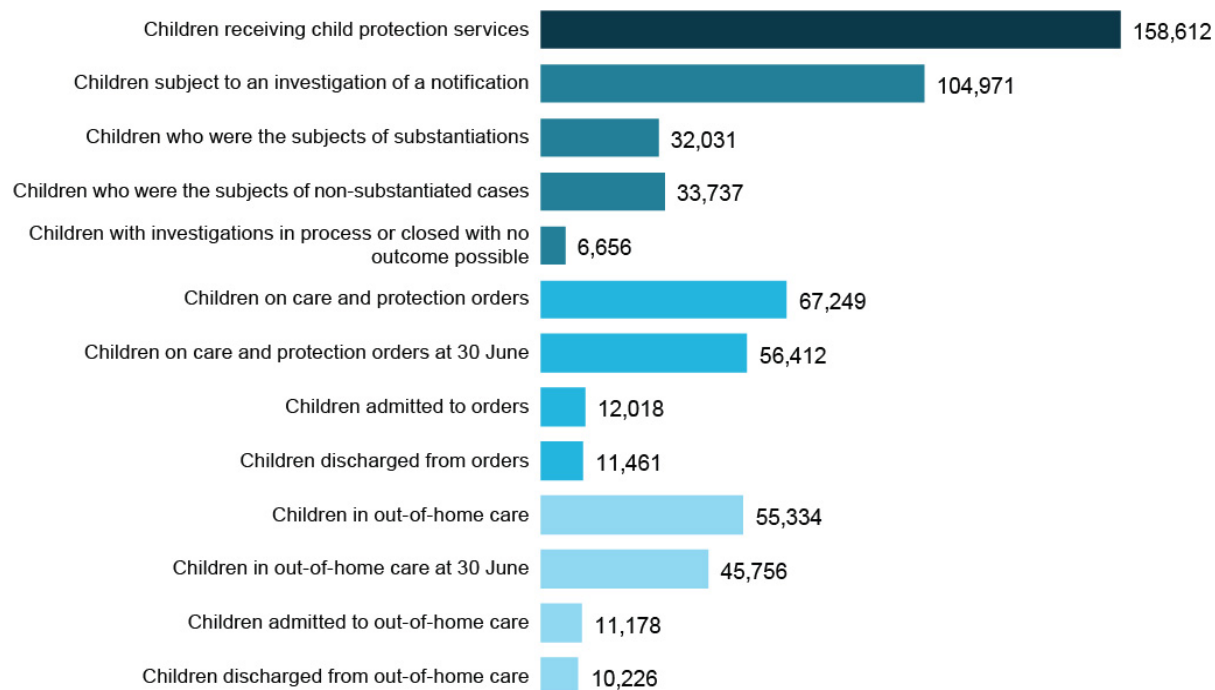
Children might be involved in more than 1 component of the child protection system. As such, the components do not sum to the total children receiving child protection services (see Figure 2.2 for the overlap of services received).

Children who were only the subject of a notification that was not subsequently investigated have not been included in this analysis. This is because, apart from an initial risk assessment, it is expected that the department responsible for child protection would have a limited level of involvement with these children and their families.

Children who received only intensive family support services have not been included in this section as unit record-level data were not available for national reporting.

See Chapter 7 for information about children receiving intensive family support services.

Figure 2.1: Children receiving child protection services, 2017–18 (number)



Notes

1. Substantiation counts exclude New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. Out-of-home care data for New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
3. Numbers presented in this figure refer to child protection services during 2017–18 except for 2 counts: children on care and protection orders at 30 June 2018, and children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018.
4. Children might be involved in more than 1 component of the system. As such, the components do not sum to the total children receiving child protection services.
5. Children might be the subject of multiple investigations and decisions to substantiate or not substantiate within the reporting period. But the numbers reported for 'children who were the subjects of substantiations' and 'children who were the subjects of non-substantiated cases' are mutually exclusive—children can be counted only for the highest level of intervention provided in the period (that is, substantiation or not a substantiation).
6. Refer to the Glossary for definitions.

Sources: Tables 2.1, 4.1, S7, S34, S35, and S61.

Table 2.1: Children receiving child protection services, by states and territories, 2017–18

Child protection component	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas ^(b)	ACT ^(c)	NT	Total
Number									
Children who were the subject of an investigation of a notification	32,547	30,336	19,526	10,347	2,967	1,071	1,437	6,740	104,971
Children on care and protection orders	24,027	17,204	11,479	6,238	4,353	1,549	1,032	1,367	67,249
Children in out-of-home care	19,795	11,271	11,158	5,276	4,151	1,419	944	1,320	55,334
Children receiving child protection services	52,146	43,333	29,573	14,947	6,538	2,439	2,251	7,385	158,612
Number per 1,000									
Children who were the subject of an investigation of a notification	18.6	21.8	16.9	17.4	8.1	9.5	15.5	107.5	19.0
Children on care and protection orders	13.8	12.4	9.9	10.5	11.9	13.8	11.1	21.8	12.2
Children in out-of-home care	11.3	8.1	9.6	8.9	11.3	12.6	10.2	21.1	10.0
Children receiving child protection services	29.8	31.1	25.5	25.1	17.9	21.7	24.3	117.8	28.7

(a) For 2017–18 New South Wales data for 'Investigations' are not comparable to data published previously. 'Investigations' counts changed to only include field assessments.

(b) Tasmania is not able to include children in care where a financial payment was offered but was declined by the carer meaning Tasmania's data are slightly lower than would be the case if the counting rule was strictly applied. Tasmanian data also exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(c) Out-of-home care data for the Australian Capital Territory includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

Notes

1. 'Children receiving child protection services' is defined as 1 or more of the following occurring within the reporting period: being subject to an investigation of a notification, being on a care and protection order, or being in out-of-home care. It is not a total count of these 3 areas; it is a count of unique children across the 3 areas.
2. Out-of-home care data for New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
3. Rates were calculated using population estimates based on the 2016 Census, and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.
4. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates, and to Table S62 for the population data.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018; Table S62.

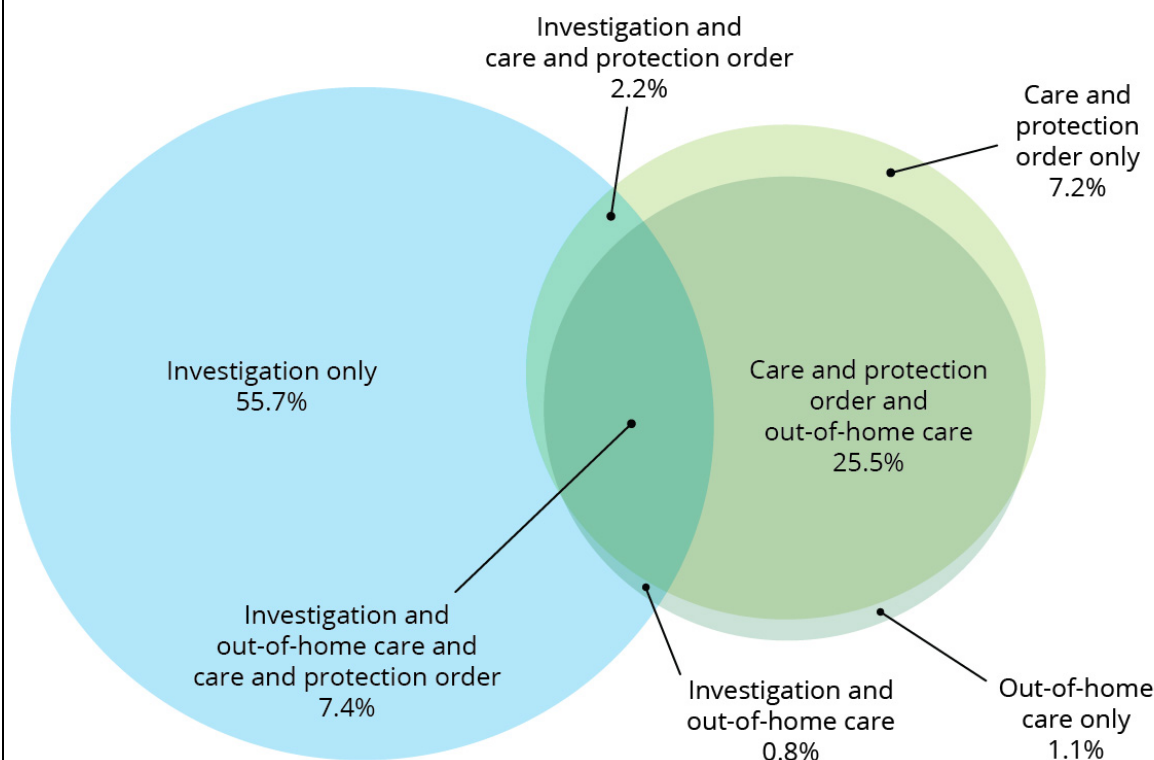
Because children may receive a combination of child protection services, there are links and overlaps between the data for:

- the notification, investigation, and substantiation
- care and protection orders
- out-of-home care.

In 2017–18, 56% of children receiving child protection services were the subject of an investigation only, and one-quarter (26%) of children were both on an order and in out-of-home-care (Figure 2.2). Overall, 7% of children were involved in all 3 components of the system.

The degree of overlap across the system components varied little between 2014–15 and 2017–18 (AIHW 2016a, 2017, 2018b).

Figure 2.2: Children receiving child protection services, by component of services received, 2017–18 (%)



Source: Table S1.

Children who were the subject of only an investigation represented a large proportion of the activity in the child protection system. For jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), maltreatment was not substantiated for 58% of these children (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Children who were the subject of a finalised investigation only, by investigation outcome and states and territories, 2017–18

Investigation outcome	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Number									
Substantiated	n.a.	12,426	4,141	3,471	1,025	520	175	1,466	23,224
Not substantiated	n.a.	11,761	11,520	3,599	801	176	969	2,956	31,782
<i>Total children in finalised investigations</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>24,187</i>	<i>15,661</i>	<i>7,070</i>	<i>1,826</i>	<i>696</i>	<i>1,144</i>	<i>4,422</i>	<i>55,006</i>
%									
Substantiated	..	51.4	26.4	49.1	56.1	74.7	15.3	33.2	42.2
Not substantiated	..	48.6	73.6	50.9	43.9	25.3	84.7	66.8	57.8
<i>Total children in finalised investigations</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Total children subject to an investigation only	..	24,961	17,404	8,576	2,107	865	1,208	6,018	61,139

Notes

1. Substantiation counts exclude New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. This table includes data for children whose only contact with child protection services during 2017–18 was an investigation. It excludes those who had an investigation *and* involvement in another area of the system, such as care and protection orders and/or out-of-home care. The data about investigation outcome are further restricted to include only those for whom an investigation was finalised in the reporting period. So, it excludes investigations in process or closed with no outcome possible. Data for all children who were the subject of substantiations are available in Table S7.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

2.2 Characteristics of children receiving child protection services

New and repeat clients

Data on new and repeat clients provide some insight into whether child protection clients are primarily new children, or those with prior involvement with the system, and whether this differs across the system components.

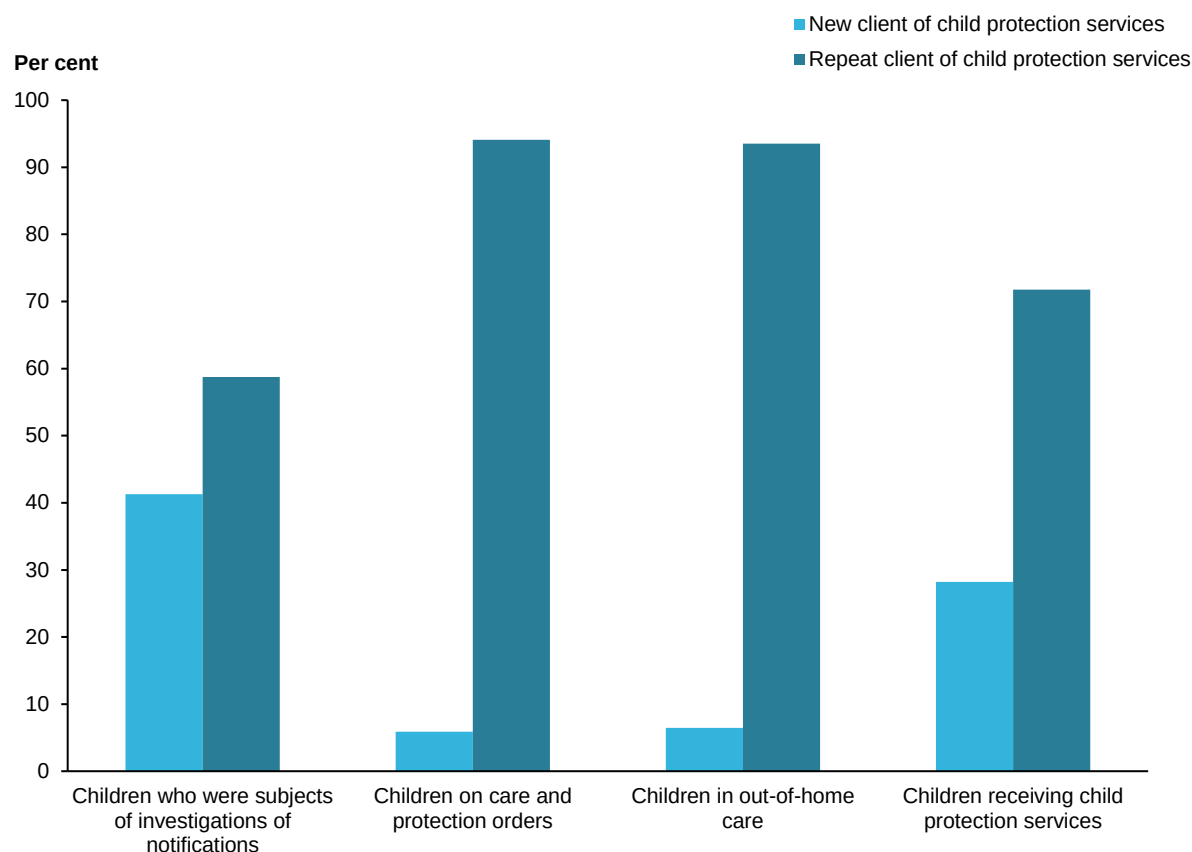
Box 2.1 provides definitions of new and repeat clients.

Box 2.1: Definition of new and repeat clients

- **New clients**—These are children or young people who have never previously been the subject of an investigation, any type of care and protection order (as per the scope of this collection), or funded out-of-home care placement (excluding respite placements lasting less than 7 days) within the jurisdiction.
- **Repeat clients**—These are children or young people who have previously been the subject of an investigation, who were discharged (according to national specifications) from any type of care and protection order or funded out-of-home care placement (excluding respite placements lasting less than 7 days), or whose earliest order and/or placement in the current reporting period is part of a preceding continuous episode of care.

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory), almost three-quarters (72%) of children receiving child protection services were repeat clients in 2017–18 (Figure 2.3). However, the percentage of repeat clients was substantially higher for those on a care and protection order (94%) or in out-of-home care (94%) than for those who were the subject of investigations during the year (59%).

Figure 2.3: New and repeat clients receiving child protection services, by service type, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

1. Excludes the Australian Capital Territory, as data were unavailable.
2. Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
3. Out-of-home care data for New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
4. 'Children receiving child protection services' is defined as 1 or more of the following occurring within the reporting period: being subject to an investigation of a notification; being on a care and protection order; or being in out-of-home care. It is not a total count of these 3 areas; it is a count of unique children across the 3 areas.
5. See Box 2.1 for definitions of new and repeat clients.

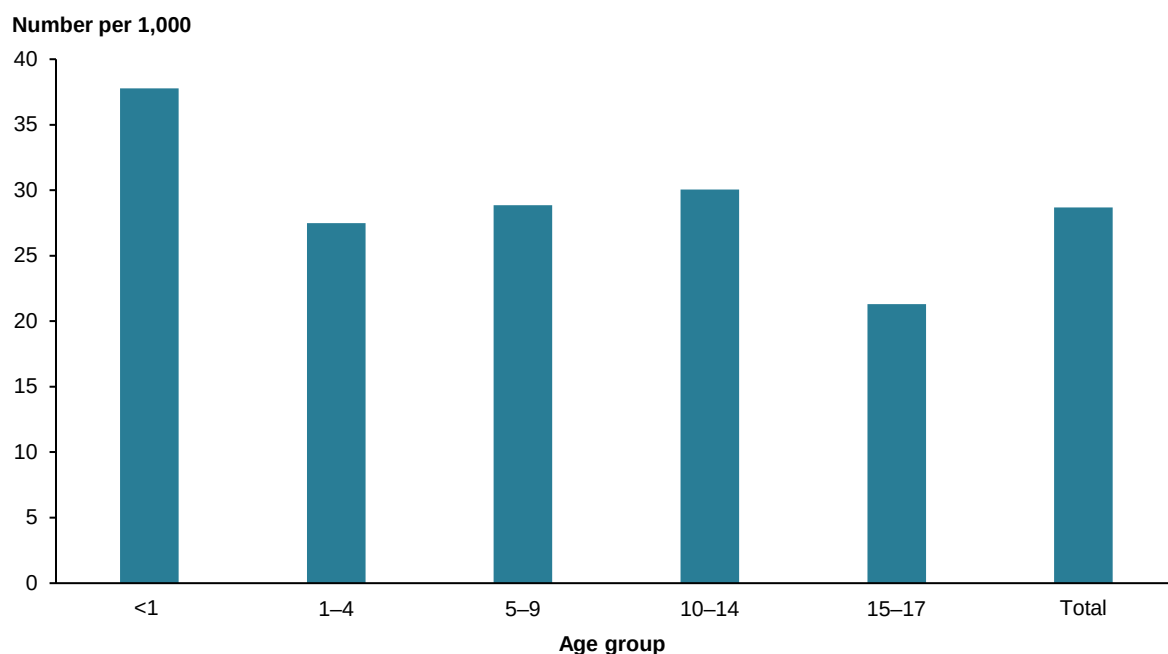
Source: Table S2.

Age

Across Australia in 2017–18, infants (children aged under 1) were most likely (37.8 per 1,000 children) to have received child protection services and those aged 15–17 were least likely (21.3 per 1,000) (Figure 2.4). The median age of children receiving these services was 8.

These findings highlight that younger children are considered the most vulnerable, and as a result, most jurisdictions have specific policies and procedures in place to protect them. There has also been an increased national focus on early intervention and on providing services early in a child's life to improve long-term outcomes and reduce the negative impacts of trauma and harm (COAG 2009; DSS 2015b; FaHCSIA 2012).

Figure 2.4: Children receiving child protection services, by age group, 2017–18 (rate)



Notes

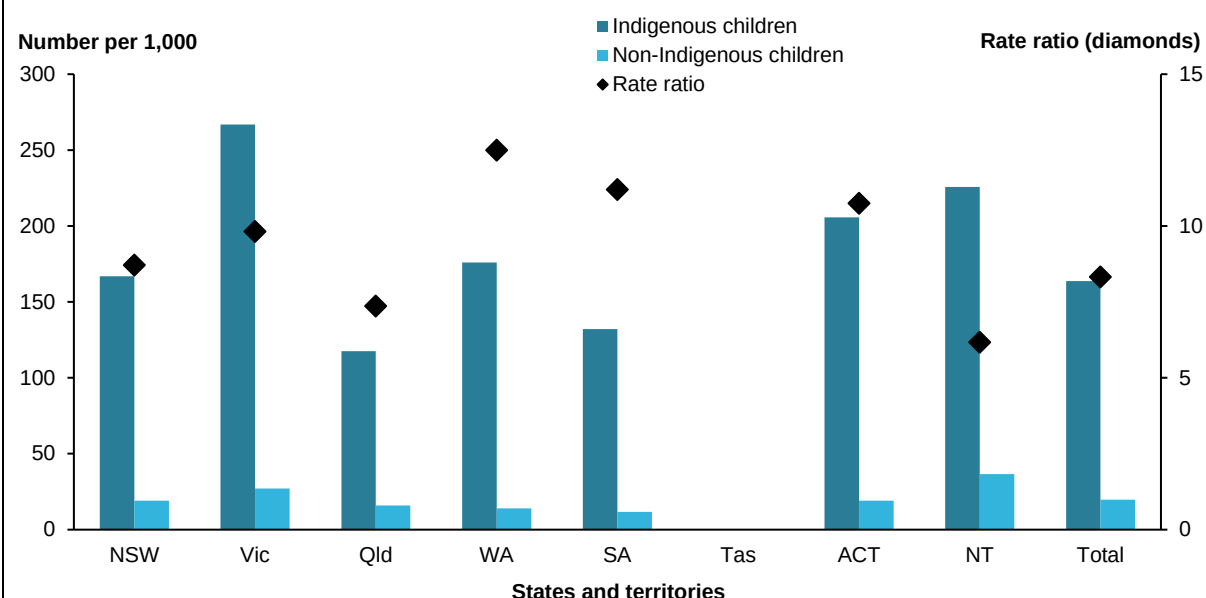
1. Unborn children might be covered under child protection legislation, so are included in this figure. But they are excluded from rate calculation for the 'less than 1' age category. Unborn children are included in the 'Total' rate.
2. Age is calculated as at the start of the financial year (that is, July 2017) if the first contact began before the start of the financial year. Otherwise, age is calculated as at the date of the first contact during the reporting period.
3. 'Total' includes children of unknown age.
4. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Table S3.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

For jurisdictions with available data in 2017–18 (excluding Tasmania), the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receiving child protection services was 163.8 per 1,000 Indigenous children, 8 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (19.7 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children) (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Children receiving child protection services, by Indigenous status and states and territories, 2017–18 (rate and rate ratio)



Notes

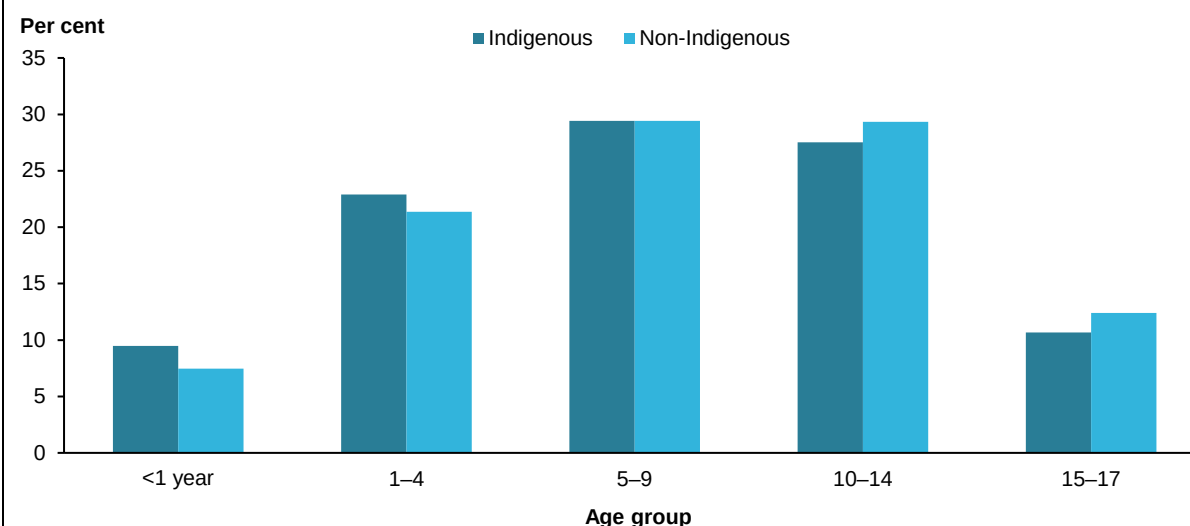
1. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
2. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Table S3.

The median age for children who received child protection services was the same for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children (both with median ages of 8).

A slightly higher proportion (32%) of Indigenous children receiving child protection services were aged under 5, compared with 29% of non-Indigenous children (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6: Children receiving child protection services, by age group and Indigenous status, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

1. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
2. Age is calculated as at the start of the financial year (that is 1 July 2017) if the first contact began before the start of the financial year. Otherwise, age is calculated as at the date of first contact during the reporting period.

Source: Table S3.

2.3 National trends

Trends for children

The number of children receiving child protection services rose by about 11% over 5 years—from about 143,000 children in 2013–14 to about 157,000 children in 2017–18 (Table S4).

Between 2016–17 and 2017–18, the number fell by 6%—from about 168,000 to 159,000. This is the result of a change in the definition of a child protection investigation for New South Wales (see Box 1.2 for further information).

The change in the definition of an investigation for New South Wales has also had an impact on the rate of children receiving child protection services. Consequently, the national rate fell from 30.8 in 2016–17 to 28.7 per 1,000 children in 2017–18.

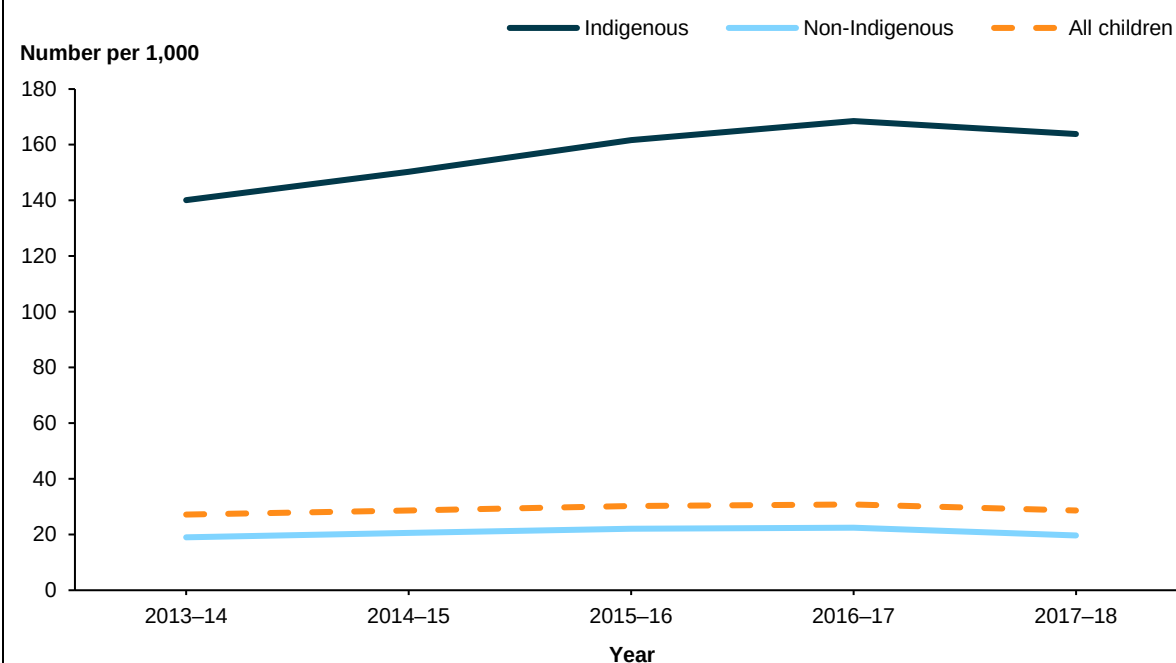
For state/territory trend data on the number and rate of children who received child protection services between 2013–14 and 2017–18, see tables A1 and A2.

Increases over time in the number or rate of children receiving child protection services or support might relate to changes in the underlying rate of child abuse and neglect, increases in notifications and access to services, or a combination of these factors.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding Tasmania), the rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children receiving child protection services rose between 2013–14 and 2017–18—from 140.1 to 163.8 per 1,000 Indigenous children, and from 19.0 to 19.7 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children. The rate of increase was larger for Indigenous children (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7: Children receiving child protection services, by Indigenous status, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (rate)



Notes

1. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
2. For 2017–18, New South Wales data for 'Investigations' are not comparable with data published previously. 'Investigations' counts changed to only include field assessments.
3. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Table S61.

3 Notifications, investigations, and substantiations

This chapter contains information on the number of notifications, investigations, and substantiations, and the number of children who were the subject of these.

'Children and young people' are defined as those under the age of 18. This includes unborn children in jurisdictions where they are covered under the child protection legislation. Unborn children are reported as a separate age group in tables disaggregated by age (where applicable).

The data in this chapter relate to notifications that departments responsible for child protection received between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018 (see Box 3.1 for data limitations, and Box 3.2 for definitions and further details).

Box 3.1: Data limitations in this chapter

New South Wales implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.

In Tasmania, Indigenous status is no longer being cross-checked with data from other databases. As a result, the proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status is larger than in previous years. This affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status, so data for Tasmania have been excluded from these analyses.

As such, these data should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

See Box 1.2 for further information about data limitations specific to this report.

Box 3.2: Notifications, investigations, and substantiations

- **Notifications**—These consist of contacts made to an authorised department by people or other bodies alleging child abuse or neglect, child maltreatment, or harm to a child. The National Child Protection Data Collection does not include reports that are not classified as child protection notifications. A notification can only involve 1 child. Where it is claimed that 2 children have been abused, neglected or harmed, this is counted as 2 notifications, even if the children are from 1 family. Where there is more than 1 notification about the same ‘event’ involving a child, this is counted as 1 notification. Where there is more than 1 notification for the same child between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, but relating to different events, these are counted as separate notifications.
- **Investigations**—These are the processes whereby the relevant department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification received between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018. Departmental staff assess the harm or degree of harm to the child, and their protective needs. An investigation includes sighting or interviewing the child where it is practical to do so.
- **Finalised investigations**—These are notifications made during 2017–18 that were investigated and had an outcome of either ‘substantiated’ or ‘not substantiated’ recorded by 31 August 2018. The cut-off point of 31 August allows time to investigate notifications made close to the end of the financial year. The outcomes of investigations that are still in process after this cut-off (5%, or about 7,400 in 2017–18) are not reported in the data for this or subsequent reporting periods. This means substantiations as reported in this report (that is, substantiations of notifications received during the year) are an under-count of the actual number of substantiations made during the year.
- **Substantiations**—Substantiations of notifications received during the current reporting year refer to child protection notifications made to relevant authorities during the year ended 30 June 2018 that were investigated, for which the investigation was finalised by 31 August 2018, and for which it was concluded that there was reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. Substantiations might also include cases where there is no suitable caregiver, such as children who have been abandoned or whose parents are deceased.

Instances of alleged abuse or neglect by family members (other than parents/guardians) and non-family members are generally included in the count of notifications if the notification was referred to the state and territory departments responsible for child protection.

For some states and territories, these cases are included in counts of investigations and substantiations only where there has been a finding or allegation of a failure to protect by the parent or guardian. For more information, see Appendix C (online)

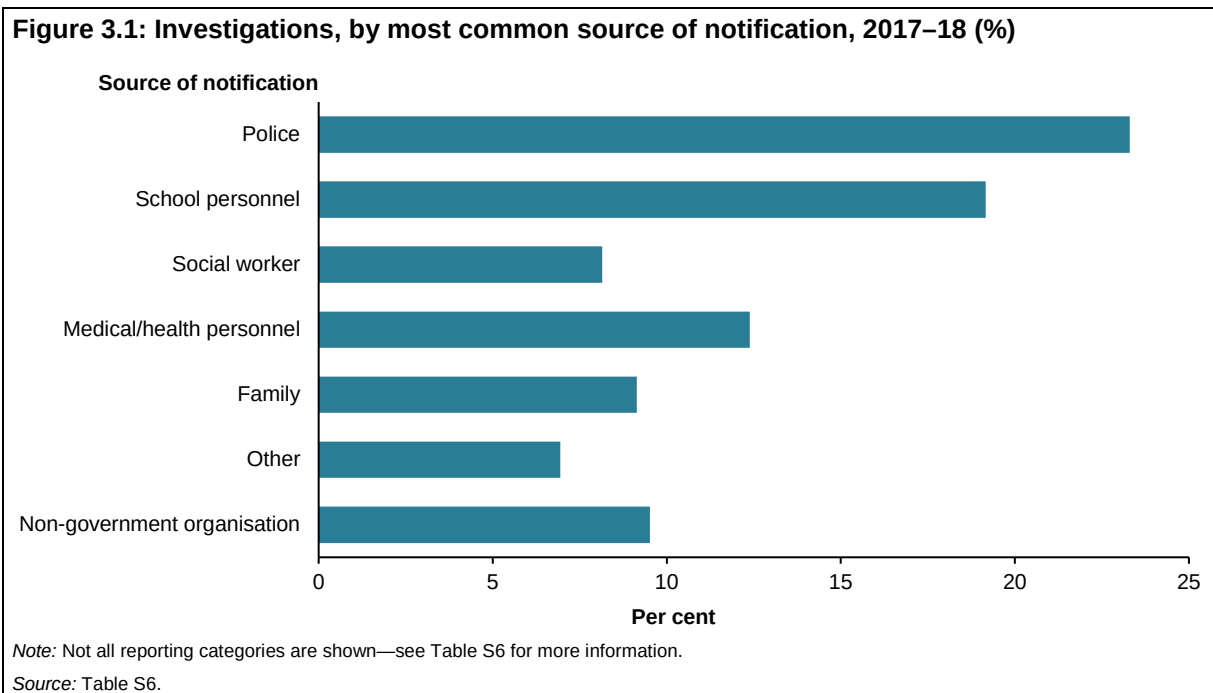
www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material.

3.1 Notifications and investigations

Of the approximately 396,000 notifications in 2017–18, about 146,000 (37%) were assessed as requiring further investigation while the rest (251,000 or 63%) were dealt with by other means, such as by being referred to a support service (Table S5). The number of notifications and the percentage of those notifications investigated are not comparable across jurisdictions. This is because legislation and policies that provide the framework for assessing child protection notifications vary broadly across jurisdictions.

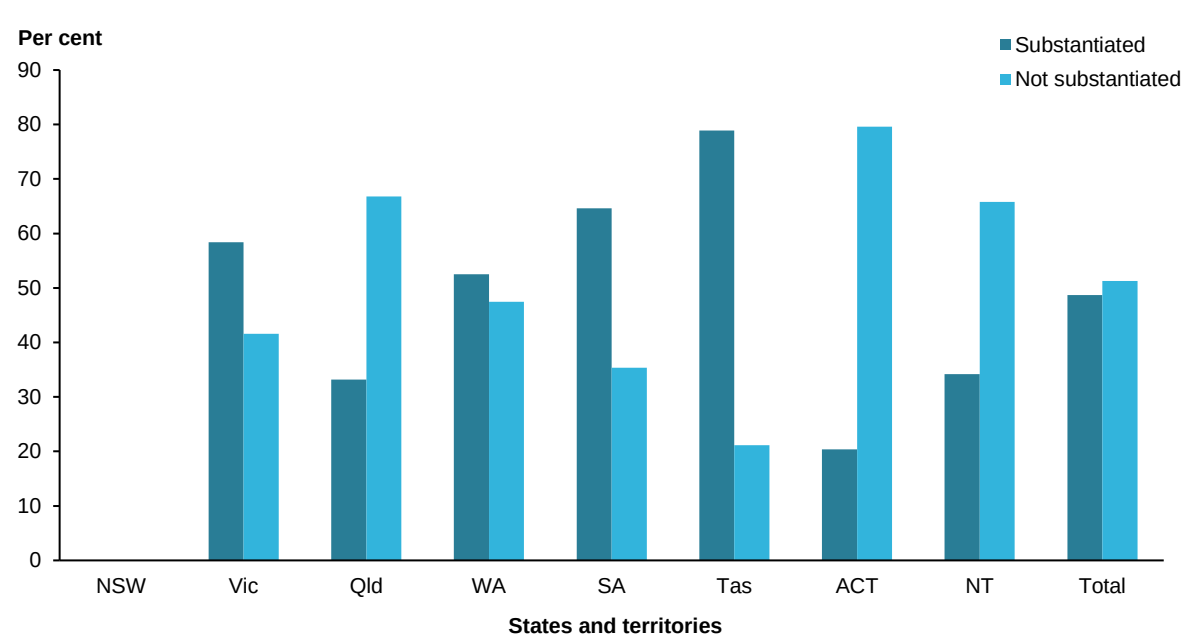
For investigations in 2017–18, the most common source of the notification was police (23%), followed by school personnel (19%) (Figure 3.1). Nationally, only 0.2% of notifications came directly from the child involved (Table S6).

Notifications to departments responsible for child protection come from various sources, and legislation for mandatory reporting varies across jurisdictions. This should be taken into consideration when interpreting these data. For more information, see mandatory reporting information by jurisdiction online www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/child-protection/child-protection-legislation-by-jurisdiction.



For jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), almost half (49%) of the children in finalised investigations were the subjects of substantiations in 2017–18 (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Children who were the subjects of finalised investigations, by outcome and states and territories, 2017–18 (%)



Note: Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.

Source: Table S7.

Children might be involved in multiple statutory child protection cases during any given year. Across Australia, in 2017–18, the total number of notifications (about 396,000) involved about 245,000 children.

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), the number of substantiations (34,900) involved 32,000 children (Table S60).

These data reflect that some children were the subject of more than 1 notification and/or substantiation—8% were the subject of more than 1 substantiation during the year (Table S8).

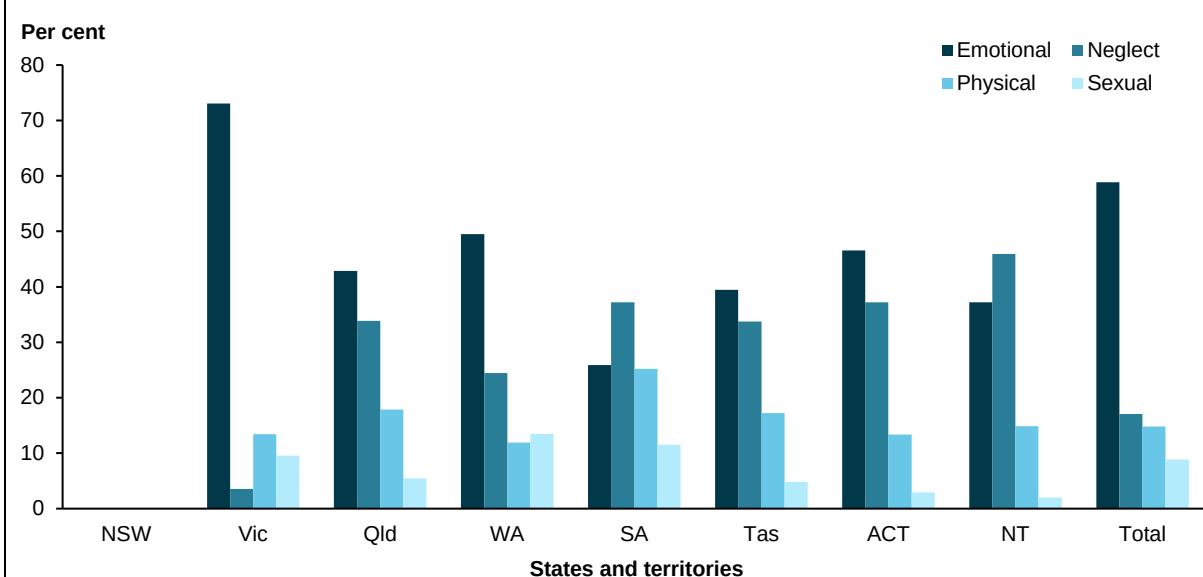
3.2 Substantiations

Types of abuse and neglect

The type of abuse or neglect reported for children who were subjects of substantiations is the type considered most likely to place the child at risk or be most severe in the short term—generally known as the ‘primary’ type of abuse or neglect.

In 2017–18, emotional abuse was the most common primary type of abuse or neglect substantiated for children (59%), followed by neglect (17%), physical abuse (15%), and sexual abuse (9%). But there was some variation between jurisdictions (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications received, by primary type of abuse or neglect and states and territories, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

1. Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. Only the type of abuse 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: Table S9.

Other types of abuse or neglect might also be recorded as part of the substantiation. The co-occurrence of abuse and neglect refers to substantiations where both primary and other types of abuse were recorded.

Table 3.1 shows the co-occurrence of primary types of abuse or neglect with other types of abuse or neglect that were recorded. As well as being the most common primary types reported, emotional abuse (51%) and neglect (37%) were also the most likely types to co-occur.

Emotional abuse co-occurred in more than two-thirds (69%) of substantiations where physical abuse was the primary type of abuse or neglect, and in half (50%) of substantiations where sexual abuse was the primary type.

Neglect co-occurred in 41% of substantiations where emotional abuse was the primary type of abuse, and in 34% of substantiations where physical abuse was the primary type.

The co-occurrence of sexual abuse was much lower than all other types of abuse or neglect, at 2.1% or less (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Co-occurrence of substantiated types of abuse and neglect, by primary type of abuse or neglect, 2017–18 (%)

Primary type of abuse or neglect	Co-occurring type of abuse or neglect ^{(a)(b)}				Total substantiations ^(c)
	Physical abuse	Sexual abuse	Emotional abuse	Neglect	
Physical abuse	..	1.3	68.9	33.9	5,125
Sexual abuse	6.2	..	49.8	18.4	3,019
Emotional abuse	37.2	2.4	..	40.7	20,424
Neglect	10.3	1.6	37.5	..	6,208
Average co-occurrence^(d)	28.4	2.1	51.3	37.1	34,776

(a) Excludes 3,556 cases for Queensland, where the same type of abuse/neglect was recorded as both a primary and co-occurring type of abuse/neglect.

(b) Not all jurisdictions were able to provide data for all types of co-occurring abuse or neglect—some jurisdictions were able to report only primary and secondary types—so the proportion of co-occurring types of abuse might be understated.

(c) Excludes 60 cases where the primary type of abuse was unknown.

(d) 'Average co-occurrence' is equal to the total number of cases where the type of abuse or neglect of interest was identified as co-occurring, divided by the total number of substantiations where the given type of abuse or neglect was not the primary type.

Note: Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

Age

Age is one of the factors that child protection workers consider when determining the time taken to respond to a notification, the type of response, and whether a notification will be substantiated.

In 2017–18, children in younger age groups were more likely to be the subjects of substantiations than those in older age groups.

Infants (children aged under 1) were most likely (17.2 per 1,000 children) to be the subjects of substantiations, and those aged 15–17 were least likely (4.1 per 1,000). This pattern was consistent across all jurisdictions with available data (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications, by age group and states and territories, 2017–18 (rate)

Age group	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Number per 1,000									
Less than 1	n.a.	25.7	8.2	11.8	17.3	8.4	8.5	55.9	17.2
1–4	n.a.	12.9	5.1	8.1	5.7	7.4	3.2	30.6	9.0
5–9	n.a.	12.4	5.0	7.7	4.2	6.9	3.0	26.5	8.4
10–14	n.a.	12.4	4.8	7.1	3.3	5.3	2.5	27.9	8.1
15–17	n.a.	6.6	2.4	3.1	1.3	2.1	1.1	14.6	4.1
0–17	n.a.	12.4	4.7	7.2	4.5	5.8	3.0	27.8	8.3
All children	n.a.	12.4	5.1	7.6	4.5	6.3	3.0	27.8	8.5
Children in substantiations (number)	n.a.	17,245	5,884	4,530	1,649	702	277	1,744	32,031

Notes

1. Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates, Table S10 for the numbers, and Table S64 for population data.
3. Unborn children might be covered under child protection legislation, so are included in this table. But they are excluded in rate calculations for the 'less than 1' and '0–17' categories. Unborn children are included in the 'All children' rates.
4. 'All children' includes children of unknown age.
5. Finalised investigations, and thus substantiations, refer only to cases that were notified during the year, and finalised by 31 August 2017. This excludes finalised investigations that were notified in a previous reporting period (see also Box 3.1 for the definition of a finalised investigation).
6. Rates were calculated using population estimates from the 2016 Census, and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous censuses.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018; Table S62.

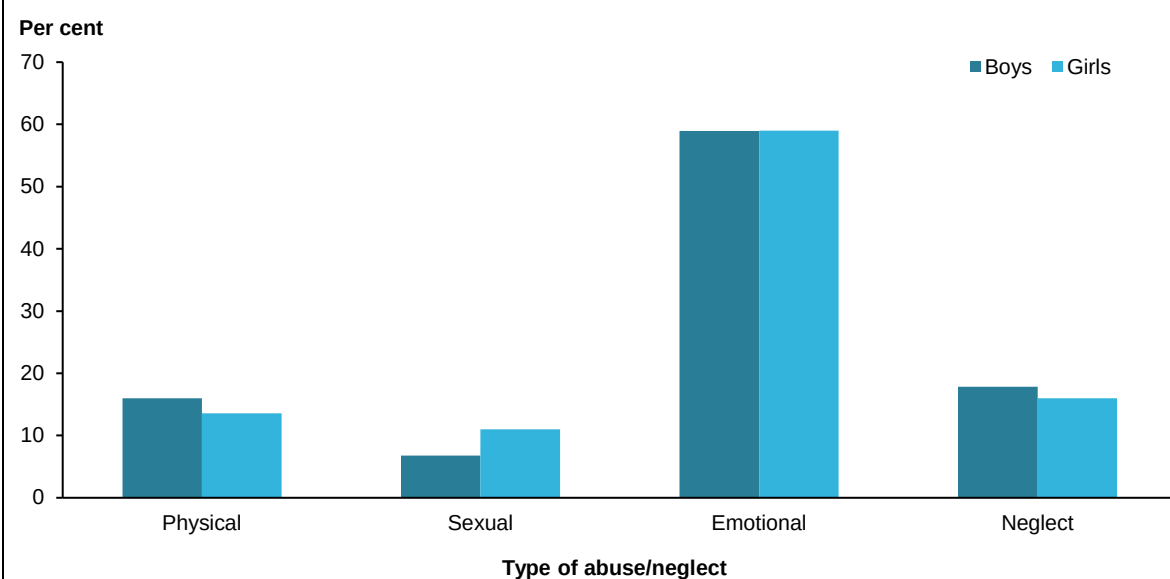
Sex

Slightly more girls (16,000) than boys (15,700) were the subjects of substantiations (Table S9).

Girls (11%) were more likely to be the subjects of substantiations of sexual abuse than boys (7%) (Figure 3.4). This is consistent with recorded crime statistics for sexual assault (ABS 2018c).

In contrast, boys had slightly higher percentages of substantiations for neglect and physical abuse (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications, by type of abuse or neglect and sex, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

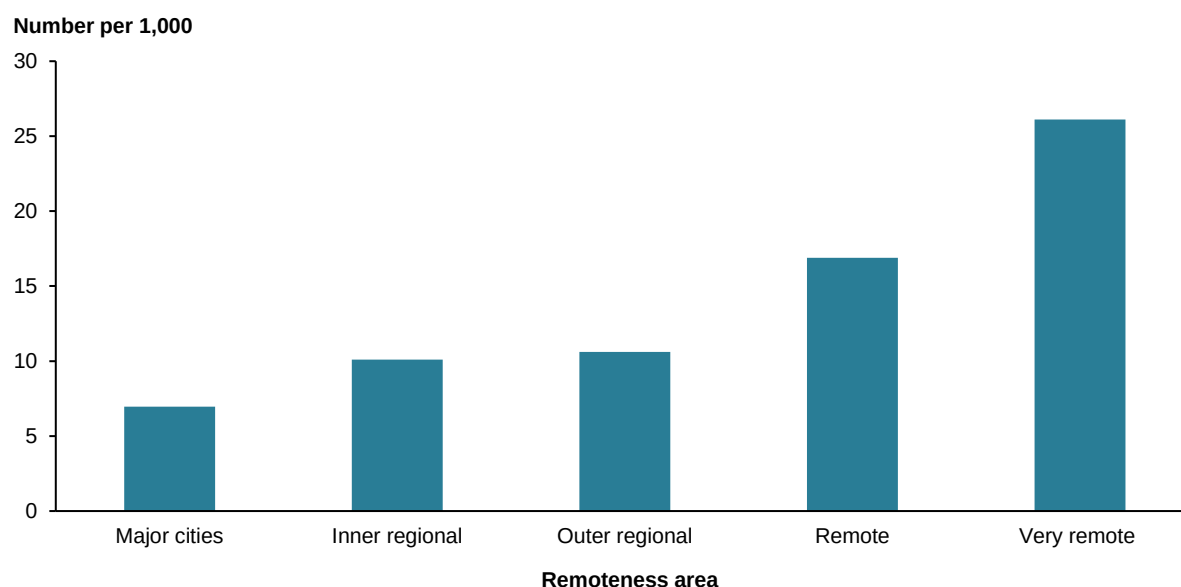
1. Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. Only the type of abuse that is most likely to place the child at risk or be most severe in the short term is reported for the first substantiation in the year.

Source: Table S9.

Remoteness area

Children from geographically remote areas had the highest rates of substantiations—children from *Very remote* areas (26.1 per 1,000 children) were 4 times as likely as those from *Major cities* (7.0 per 1,000) to be the subject of a substantiation (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: Children who were the subjects of substantiations, by remoteness area, 2017–18 (rate)



Notes

1. Remoteness data at the time of notification exclude New South Wales, because location data were not available.
2. Information on remoteness area can be recorded at different times—at the time the abuse or neglect took place, or at the time of the notification, investigation, or substantiation.
3. See Appendix A for more information on the calculation of remoteness areas.

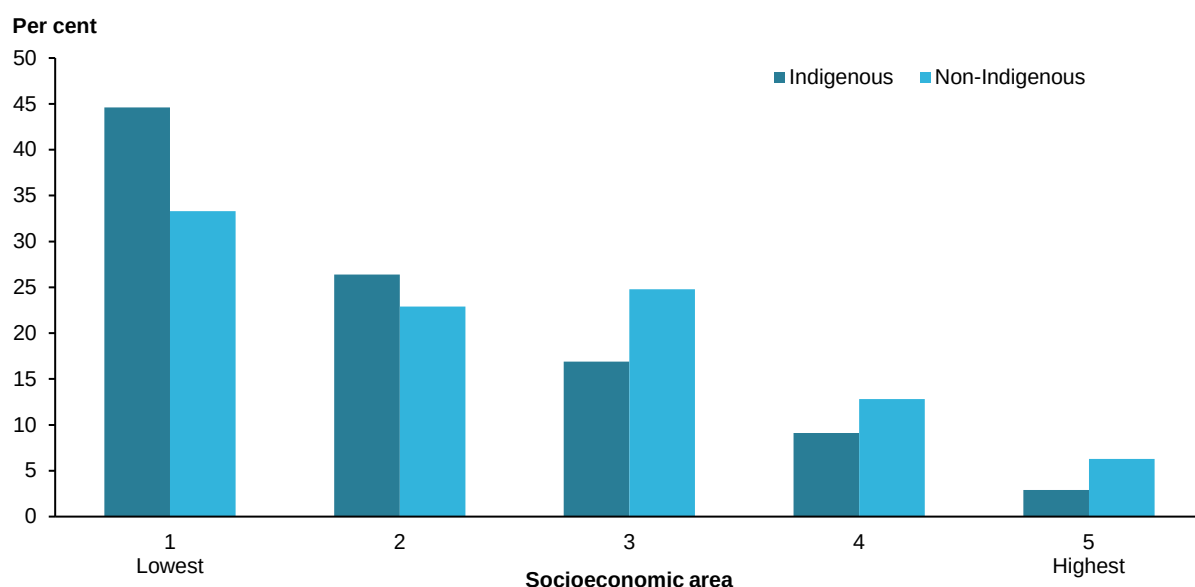
Source: Table S11b.

Socioeconomic area

Children who were the subjects of substantiations were more likely to be from the lowest socioeconomic areas (36% in the lowest socioeconomic area compared with 5% in the highest) (Table S12).

Indigenous children who were the subjects of substantiations were far more likely to be from the lowest socioeconomic areas (45%) than non-Indigenous children (33%) (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6: Children who were the subjects of substantiations, by socioeconomic area and Indigenous status, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

1. Socioeconomic data exclude New South Wales, because location data were not available.
2. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
3. Information on socioeconomic area can be recorded at different times—at the time the abuse or neglect took place, or at the time of the notification, investigation, or substantiation.
4. See Appendix A for more information on the calculation of socioeconomic areas.

Source: Table S12.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in substantiations

For jurisdictions with available data in 2017–18 (excluding New South Wales and Tasmania), 42.0 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were the subject of a substantiation—almost 7 times the rate of non-Indigenous children (6.5 per 1,000) (Figure 3.7). This is consistent with findings for previous years (Figure 3.13).

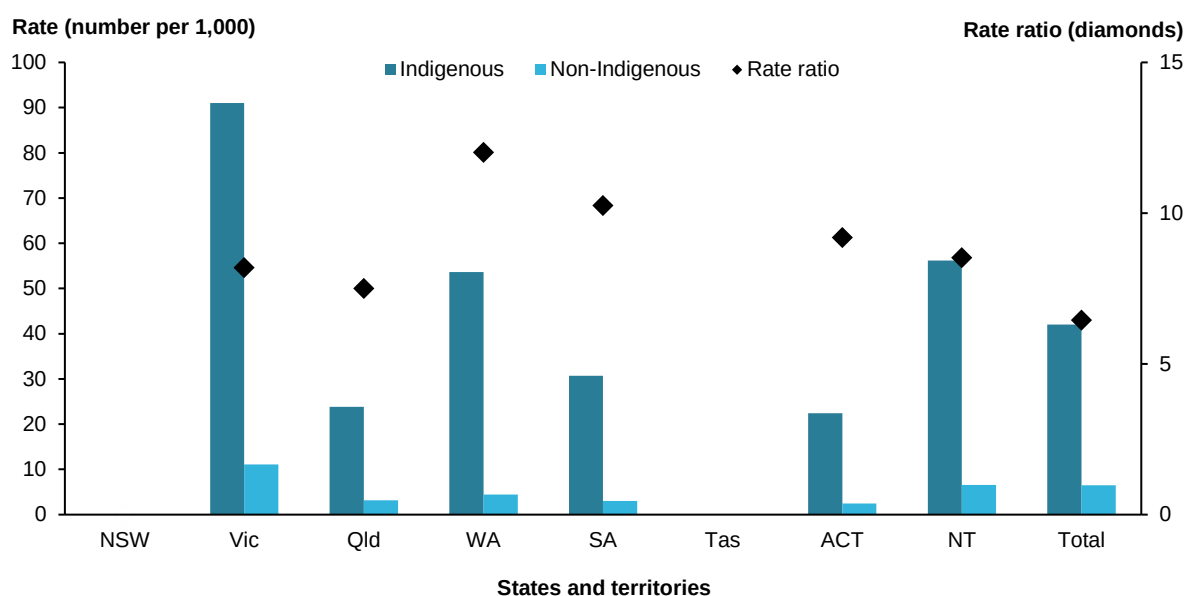
The reasons for the over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection substantiations are complex. Underlying causes include:

- the legacy of past policies of forced removal
- intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture
- a higher likelihood of living in the lowest socioeconomic areas
- perceptions arising from cultural differences in child-rearing practices (HREOC 1997).

Indigenous children are also over-represented in other areas related to child safety, including:

- hospital admissions for injuries and assault
- experiences of homelessness
- involvement in the youth justice system (AIHW 2014b).

Figure 3.7: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications received during 2017–18, by Indigenous status and states and territories, 2017–18 (rate and rate ratio)



Notes

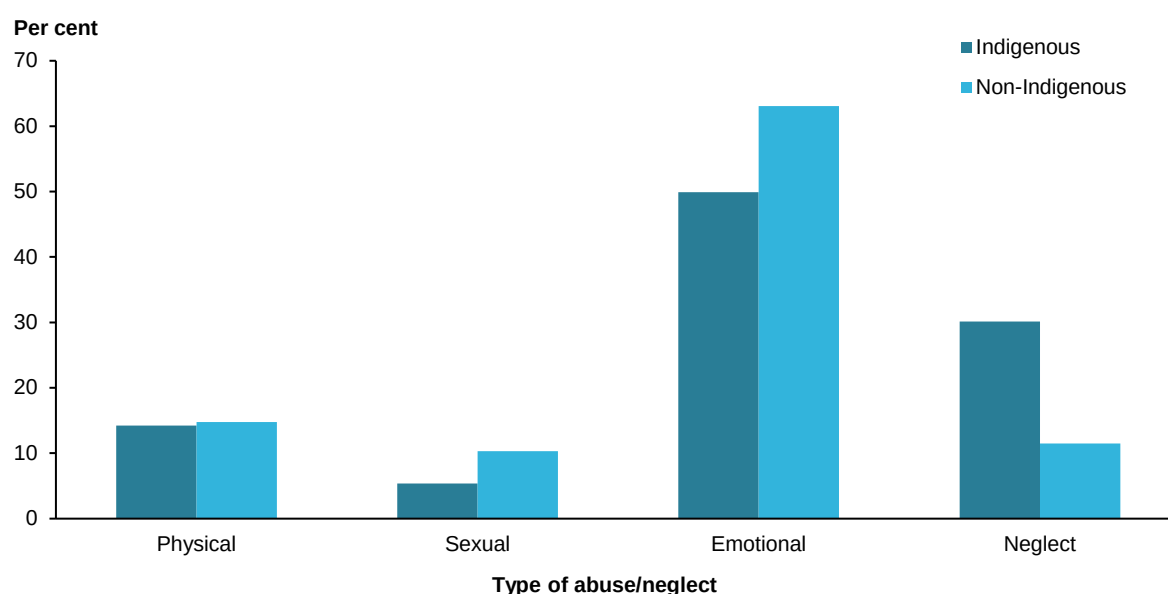
1. Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
3. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Table S13.

Type of abuse and neglect

Emotional abuse was the most common type of substantiated abuse for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. Indigenous children had a higher percentage of substantiations for neglect (30%) than non-Indigenous children (12%), and a lower percentage of substantiations for emotional and sexual abuse (Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications, by Indigenous status and type of abuse, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

1. Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
3. For each child, the type of abuse/neglect reported is the type identified for their first substantiation in the year. Where multiple types of abuse were reported in the same substantiation, the data reflect the type of abuse that is most likely to place the child at risk or be most severe in the short term.

Source: Table S14.

3.3 National trends

Due to the data limitations noted in boxes 1.2 and 3.1:

- all national substantiation trends reported in this section exclude New South Wales
- national trends disaggregated by Indigenous status (Figure 3.13) also exclude Tasmania.

As such, these data should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

Trends for notifications, investigations and substantiations

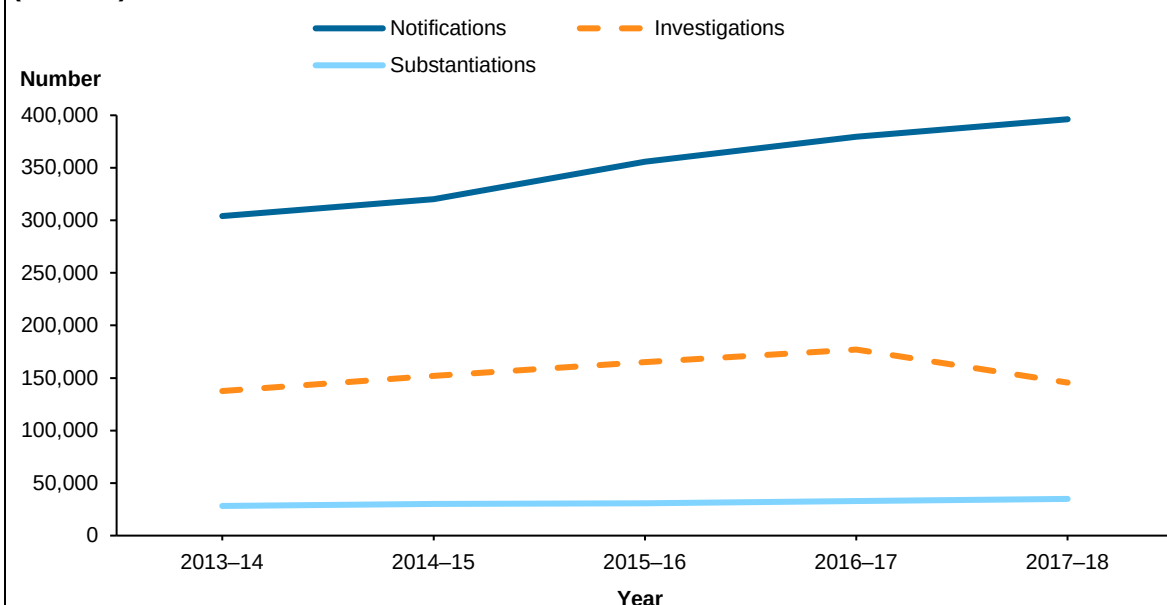
Between 2013–14 and 2017–18, numbers rose by:

- 30% for notifications
- 6% for investigations
- 24% for substantiations (Figure 3.9).

Although, nationally, notifications and substantiations rose over the 5 years, the size and direction of change varied across jurisdictions (tables S15 and S16).

Between 2016–17 and 2017–18, the number of investigations fell, which can be attributed to a change in how New South Wales defined an investigation.

Figure 3.9: Trends in notifications, investigations, and substantiations, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (number)



Notes

1. For 2017–18, New South Wales data for 'Investigation' and 'Dealt with by other means' are not comparable with data published previously. 'Investigation' counts changed to only include field assessments, while all office-based assessments are now counted in the 'Dealt with by other means' category.
2. Substantiation data are unavailable for New South Wales for 2017–18, as the state implemented a new client management system during that year, and is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting. For comparison purposes, substantiation counts for all periods have been adjusted to exclude New South Wales from all periods.

Source: Table S60.

Trends for children

The rate of children who were the subjects of notifications rose from 37.8 per 1,000 children in 2013–14 to 44.4 per 1,000 in 2017–18 (Figure 3.10).

For jurisdictions with data (excluding New South Wales), 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 in 2017–18.

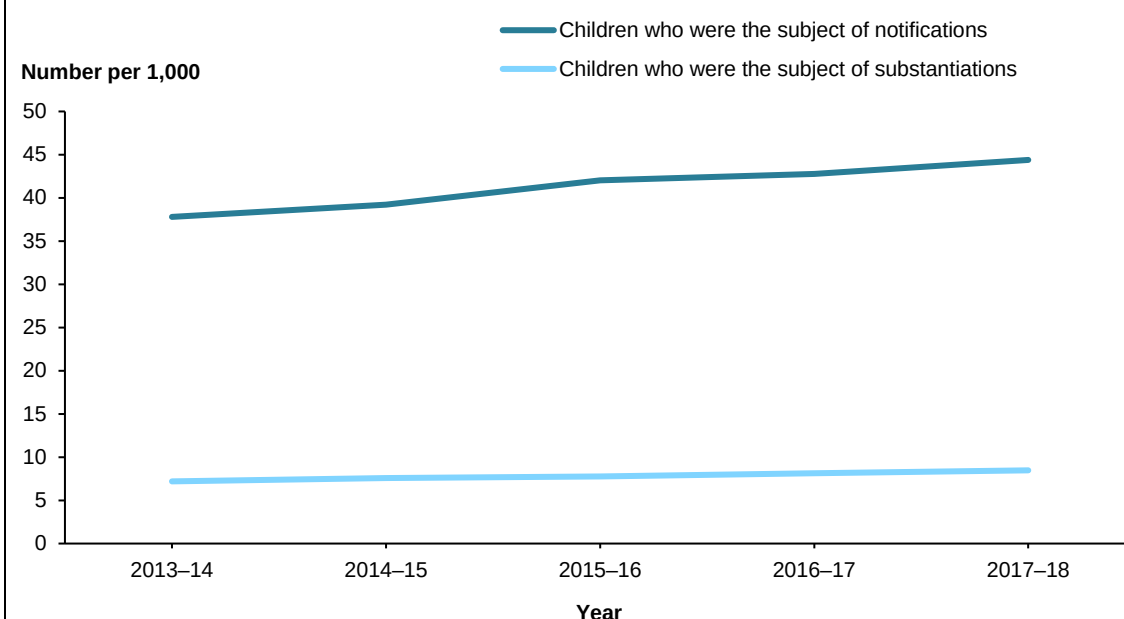
For state/territory trend data on the number and rate of children who were the subjects of substantiations between 2013–14 and 2017–18, see tables A1 and A2.

Legislative changes, increased public awareness, and inquiries into child protection processes, along with real rises in abuse and neglect, could influence increases in the number of notifications and substantiations, and the children who were the subject of them.

Additionally, recent increases could be related to an increased focus on providing statutory responses to those who are most likely to need intervention and protection. This might have resulted in a more targeted approach to investigations, and a rise in the number of children who were the subjects of substantiations.

Information on state and territory policies and practices, and on the various inquiries into state and territory child protection services that might have increased public awareness is provided at Appendixes C–E (online) www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material.

Figure 3.10: Trends in children who were the subjects of notifications and substantiations, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (rate)



Notes

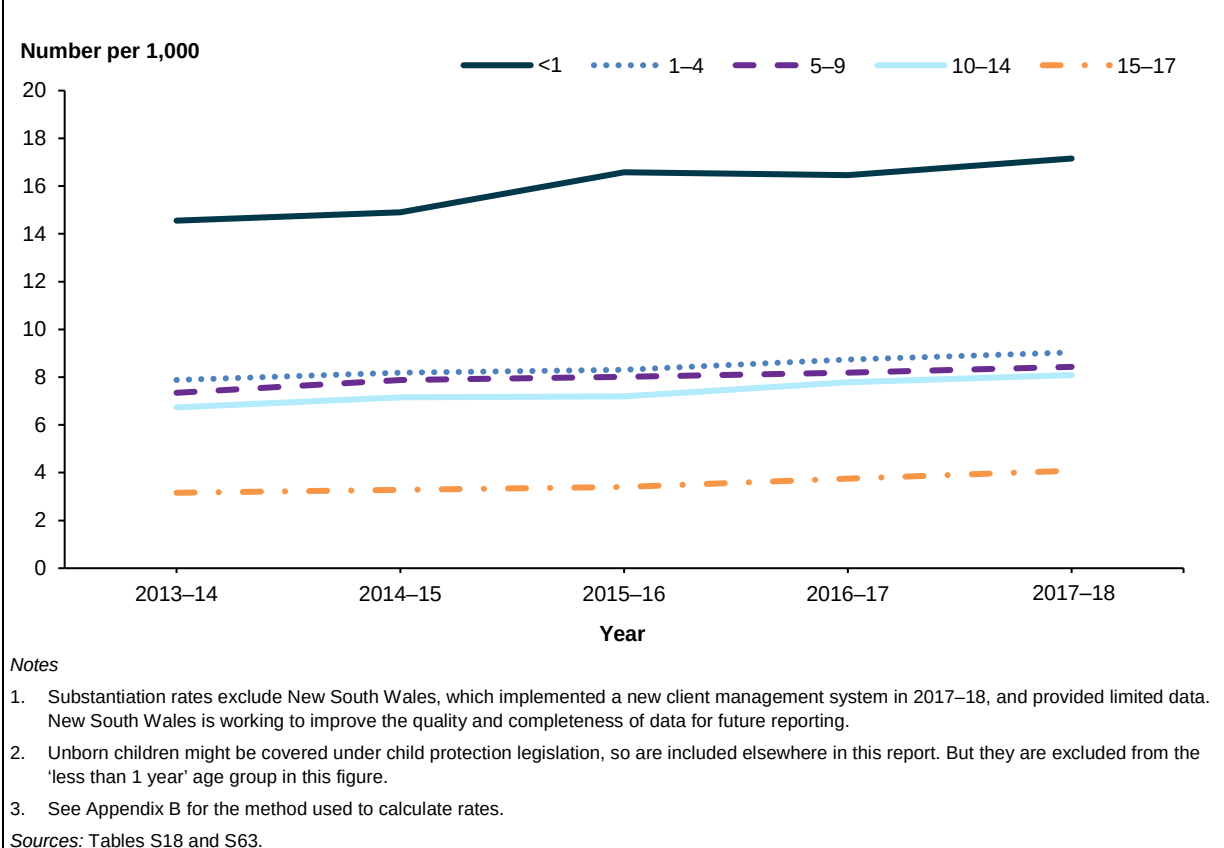
1. Substantiation rates exclude New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Table S60.

Age profile

Since 2013–14, the rates of children aged under 1 who were the subjects of substantiations have been consistently higher than the rates for any other age group. The rate of children aged under 1 who were the subjects of substantiations rose from 14.6 per 1,000 children in 2013–14 to 17.2 per 1,000 in 2017–18. The rates for other age groups also rose over the 5-year period (Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11: Trends in children aged 0–17 who were the subjects of substantiations, by age group, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (rate)

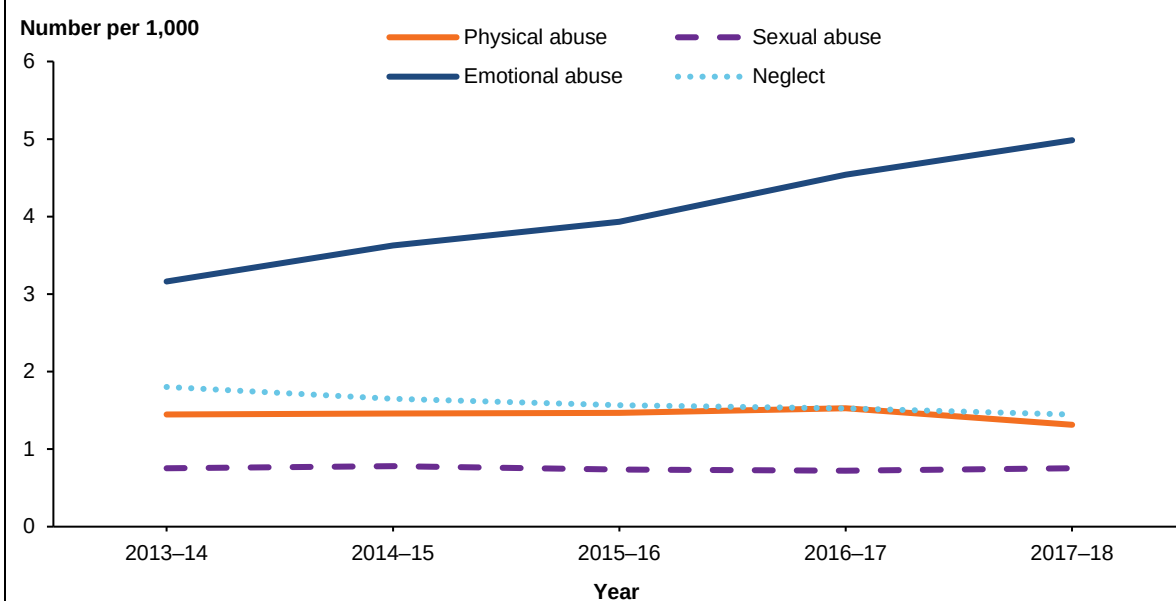


Type of abuse and neglect

Between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the rates of children who were the subjects of substantiations for emotional abuse were the highest of all types of abuse or neglect, and showed the greatest increase of all types of abuse or neglect (from 3.2 to 5.0 per 1,000 children) over this time.

The rates for physical abuse and neglect fell slightly over the 5 years to 2017–18, while the rates for sexual abuse remained relatively stable (Figure 3.12).

Figure 3.12: Trends in children who were the subjects of substantiations, by type of abuse, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (rate)



Notes

1. Substantiation rates exclude New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates.

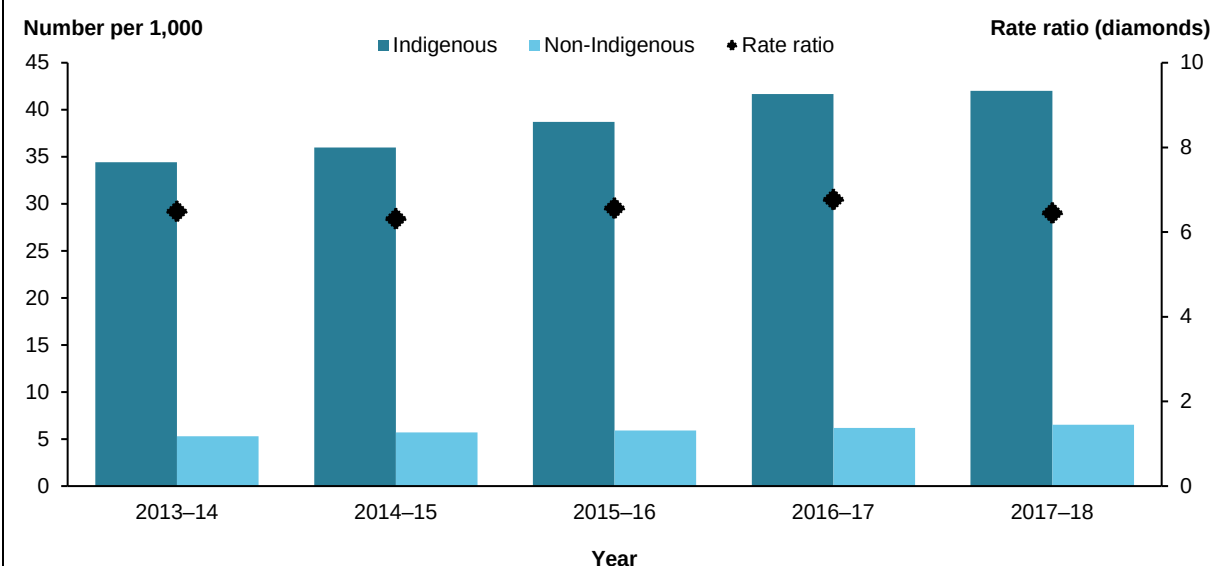
Sources: Tables S19 and S62.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the substantiation rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children have both increased—from 34.4 to 42.0 per 1,000 Indigenous children, and from 5.3 to 6.5 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children.

The rate ratio was consistent in 2013–14 and 2017–18, at 6.5 (Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13: Trends in children who were the subjects of substantiations, by Indigenous status, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (rate and rate ratio)



Notes

1. Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
3. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Table S61.

4 Care and protection orders

Care and protection orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments partial responsibility for a child's welfare (see Box 4.1 for national categories).

For this report, children are counted only once, even if they were admitted to, or discharged from, more than 1 order, or were on more than 1 order at 30 June 2018.

If a child was on more than 1 order at 30 June 2018, the child is counted as being on the order that implies the highest level of intervention by the department (with finalised guardianship or custody orders being the most interventionist, and interim and temporary orders the least interventionist).

Box 4.1: National care and protection order types

- **Finalised guardianship or custody orders**—Guardianship orders involve the transfer of legal guardianship to the relevant state or territory department or non-government agency. These orders involve considerable intervention in the child's life and that of their family, and are sought only as a last resort.

Custody orders generally refer to orders that place children in the custody of the state or territory department responsible for child protection or a non-government agency. These orders usually involve the child protection department being responsible for the daily care and requirements of the child, while the parent retains legal guardianship. Finalised guardianship or custody orders can be long term or short term.

Long-term orders transfer guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period greater than 2 years, generally until the child reaches the age of 18.

Short-term orders transfer guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period of 2 years or less.

- **Finalised third-party parental responsibility orders**—These orders transfer 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. Finalised third-party parental responsibility orders can be long term or short term (see *Long-term orders* and *Short-term orders*).
- **Finalised supervisory orders**—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.
- **Interim and temporary orders**—These orders cover the provisions 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.
- **Administrative arrangement orders**—These are agreements with child protection departments, which have the same effect as a court order of transferring custody or guardianship. These arrangements can also allow a child to be placed in out-of-home care without going through the courts.

(continued)

Box 4.1 (continued): National care and protection order types

- **Immigration (Guardianship of Children) orders**—These are orders made under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*. Under this Act, the Minister for Immigration is the legal guardian for unaccompanied humanitarian minors (children aged under 18 who have entered Australia without a relative to care for them). But the minister may assign custody of the child to a willing and suitable person in the jurisdiction where a child lives. The assigned person becomes responsible for all matters concerning the child's daily activities, care, and welfare. This category captures the arrangements of children who are subsequently placed with carers funded by the departments responsible for child protection.

Children are counted in the state or territory where the order is operative, regardless of where the child lives. Excluded from the collection are:

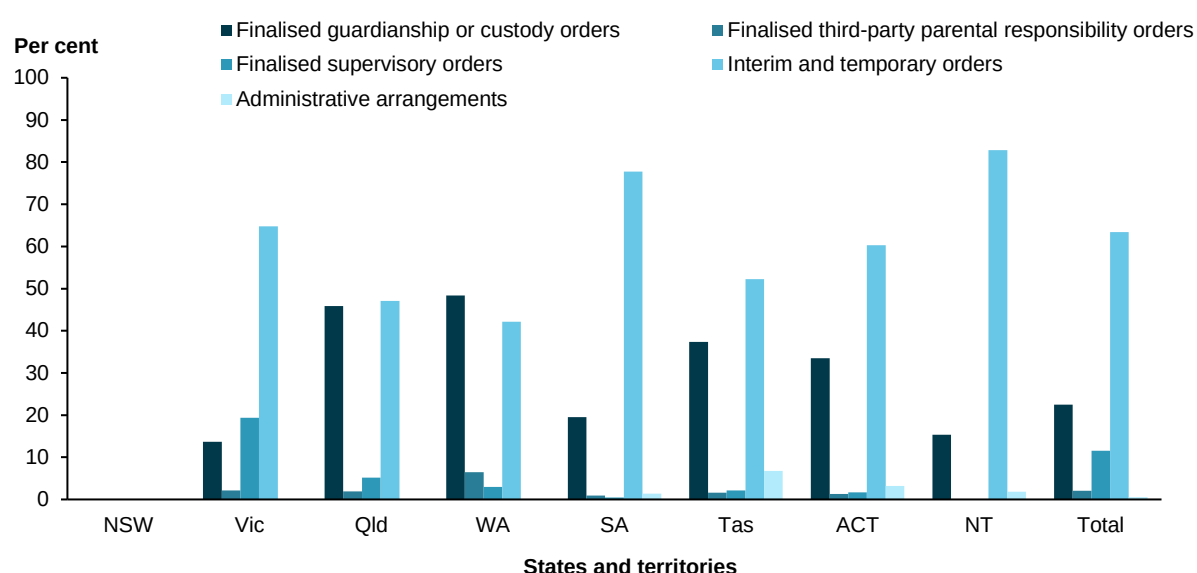
- children on offence orders, unless they are also on a care and protection order
- administrative and voluntary arrangements with the departments responsible for child protection that do not have the effect of transferring custody or guardianship.

4.1 Types of orders issued

For jurisdictions with available data in 2017–18 (excluding New South Wales), about 36,700 care and protection orders were issued. Of these, most were interim and temporary orders (63%, or 23,300) or finalised guardianship and custody orders (22% or 8,200).

The types of care and protection orders issued varied across jurisdictions, reflecting both the different types of orders available, and the different policies and practices putting them into effect (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Care and protection orders issued, by type of order and states and territories, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

1. Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.
2. Administrative arrangements are not applicable to Victoria and Queensland.

Source: Table S20.

4.2 Children admitted to, and discharged from, orders

In 2017–18, about 12,000 children were admitted to care and protection orders, three-quarters (75%) of whom were admitted for the first time (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Children admitted to, and discharged from, care and protection orders, by states and territories, 2017–18 (number)

	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld ^(b)	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Children admitted to orders	2,231	5,255	1,924	1,191	686	321	140	270	12,018
Children admitted for the first time	1,835	3,808	1,438	817	607	196	118	207	9,026
<i>Percentage of all admissions</i>	<i>82.3</i>	<i>72.5</i>	<i>74.7</i>	<i>68.6</i>	<i>88.5</i>	<i>61.1</i>	<i>84.3</i>	<i>76.7</i>	75.1
Children discharged from orders	3,223	4,348	1,910	816	518	243	136	267	11,461

(a) New South Wales data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders. NSW is working to improve the way it counts admissions to care and protection orders, but currently does not strictly conform to the national counting rules.

(b) Data produced from the CP NMDS based on nationally agreed specifications may not match Qld figures published elsewhere.

Notes

1. Data might include children who were discharged on their 18th birthday.
2. A renewal of an existing order is not counted as an admission. A change to an order is counted as an admission. However, if a new care and protection order is applied in 5 days or less of the discharge of another order (regardless of the type of order), neither an admission nor a discharge are counted.
3. If a child is on multiple care and protection orders/arrangements, all orders/arrangements must be discharged before a discharge for the purposes of this table is counted.
4. If a child is admitted to, or discharged from, multiple care and protection orders/arrangements, the child is counted for only 1 admission and/or 1 discharge for the year.

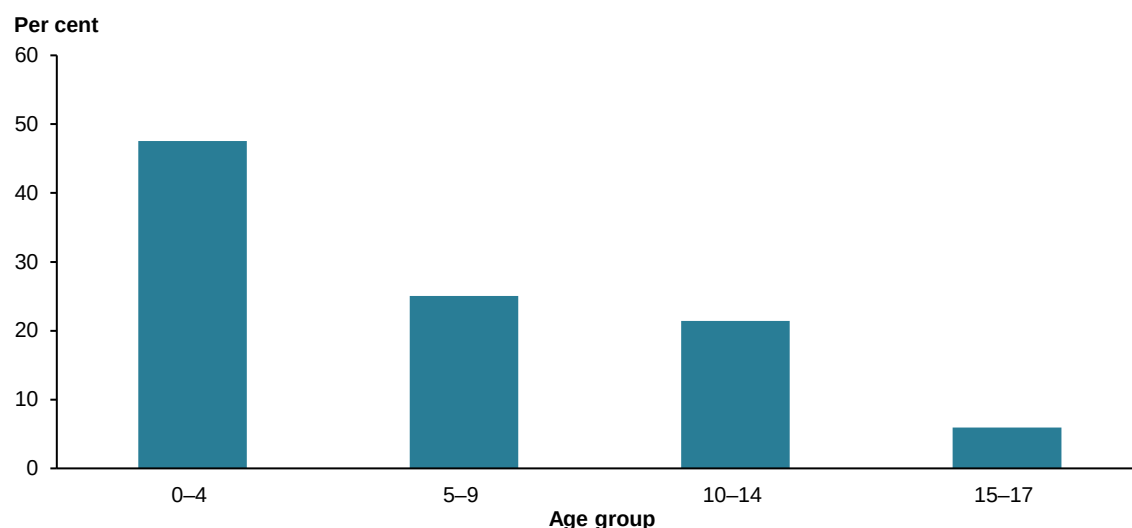
Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

Children might be admitted (or re-admitted) to a care and protection order for various reasons, including substantiated abuse, irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between the child and their parents, or where parents are unwilling and/or unable to adequately care for the child.

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), 27% of children who were the subjects of substantiations in 2016–17 were subsequently placed on a care and protection order within 12 months (Table S21).

Almost half (48%) of children admitted to orders in 2017–18 were aged 0–4, with a median age of 5 (Figure 4.2). This reflects the previously noted view that younger children are considered the most vulnerable. Age patterns were similar to those for substantiations of notifications, with a decreasing proportion as age increased.

Figure 4.2: Children admitted to care and protection orders, by age group, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

1. A renewal of an existing order is not counted as an admission. A change to an order is counted as an admission. But if a new care and protection order is applied in 5 days or less of the discharge of another order (regardless of the type of order), an admission is not counted.
2. Children are counted for only 1 admission during the year.

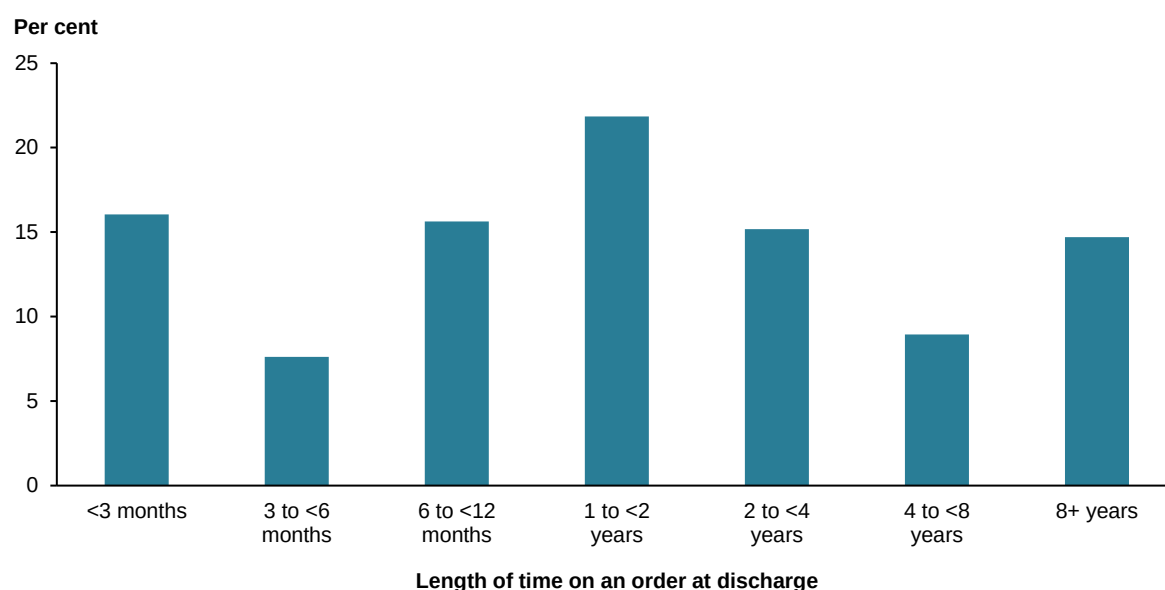
Source: Table S22.

Length of time on an order at discharge

Of the approximately 11,500 children discharged from care and protection orders in 2017–18:

- 16% were continuously on an order for less than 3 months
- 22% were continuously on an order for 1–2 years
- 15% were continuously on an order for 8 years or more (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Children discharged from care and protection orders, by length of time on an order, 2017–18 (%)



Notes

1. If a child is discharged from an order and a new care and protection order/arrangement is applied in 5 days or less of the discharge, the orders are deemed to be consecutive (that is, the length of time continuously on an order will include both orders).
2. If a child is on multiple care and protection orders/arrangements, all orders/arrangements must be discharged before a discharge is counted in this figure.
3. The length of time continuously on an order is counted only for the first order/arrangement from which the child is discharged during the year.

Source: Table S23.

For jurisdictions with available data in 2017–18 (excluding Tasmania), both Indigenous children (20%) and non-Indigenous children (23%) were most likely to have been continuously on an order for 1–2 years at the time of discharge (Table S23).

4.3 Children on care and protection orders

Nationally, at 30 June 2018, about 56,400 children were on care and protection orders—a rate of 10.1 per 1,000 children (see Table 4.2 for numbers and rates across jurisdictions).

Table 4.2: Children on care and protection orders, by states and territories, 30 June 2018

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Number	20,331	13,303	9,955	5,542	3,872	1,380	904	1,125	56,412
Number per 1,000	11.5	9.6	8.5	9.3	10.6	12.3	9.6	17.9	10.1

Notes

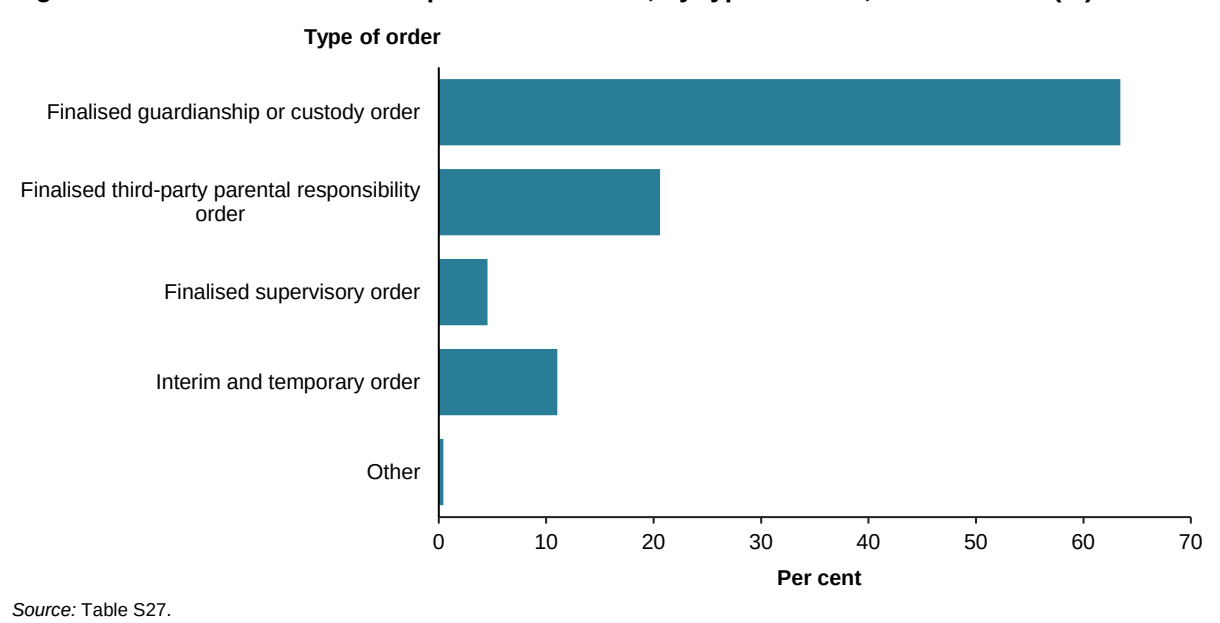
1. New South Wales data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders.
2. Data for Tasmania may not be comparable year to year due to issues with the recording of order status.
3. Rates were calculated using population estimates based on the 2016 Census, and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous censuses.

Sources: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018; Table S64.

Type of order

Of the approximately 56,400 children who were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2018, almost two-thirds (63%, or 35,800) were on finalised guardianship or custody orders (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Children on care and protection orders, by type of order, 30 June 2018 (%)

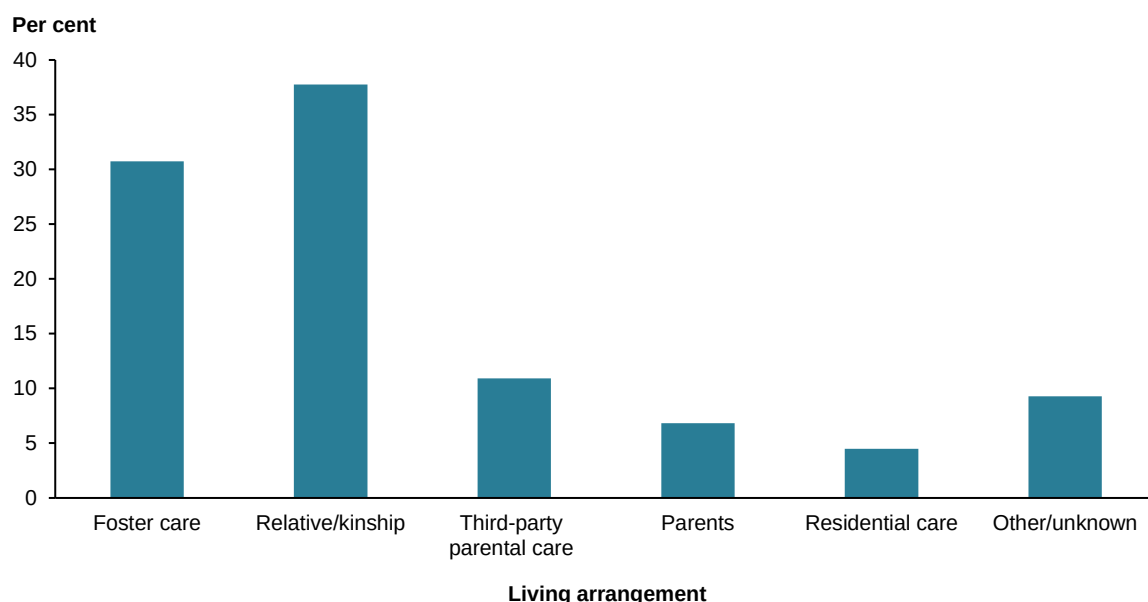


Living arrangement

At 30 June 2018, the majority of children on care and protection orders lived in funded out-of-home care, either with relative/kinship carers (38%) or in foster care (31%).

A smaller percentage were living in third-party parental care arrangements (11%), with their parents (7%), or in residential care (4%) (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Children on care and protection orders, by living arrangements, 30 June 2018 (%)



Source: Table S24.

The living arrangements of children on orders generally reflected their age. Across Australia, 98% of children on orders who were living independently were aged 15–17, and 95% of children on orders who were under 5 were living in family care, third-party parental care, or home-based care (Table S25).

Age and sex

Of the approximately 56,400 children on orders at 30 June 2018:

- 21% were aged under 5 (compared with 48% of children admitted to orders)
- 62% were aged 5–14
- 17% were aged 15–17 (Table S26)
- 51% were boys
- 48% were girls (Table S28).

For jurisdictions with available data in 2017–18 (excluding Tasmania), the distribution of children on care and protection orders for all age groups was similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, and across jurisdictions (Table S26).

The age distribution of all children on orders at 30 June 2018 was somewhat older than that for children admitted to orders during 2018. This reflects that the numbers of children at 30 June includes children who were admitted during previous years and remained on an order in 2018 (tables S22 and S26).

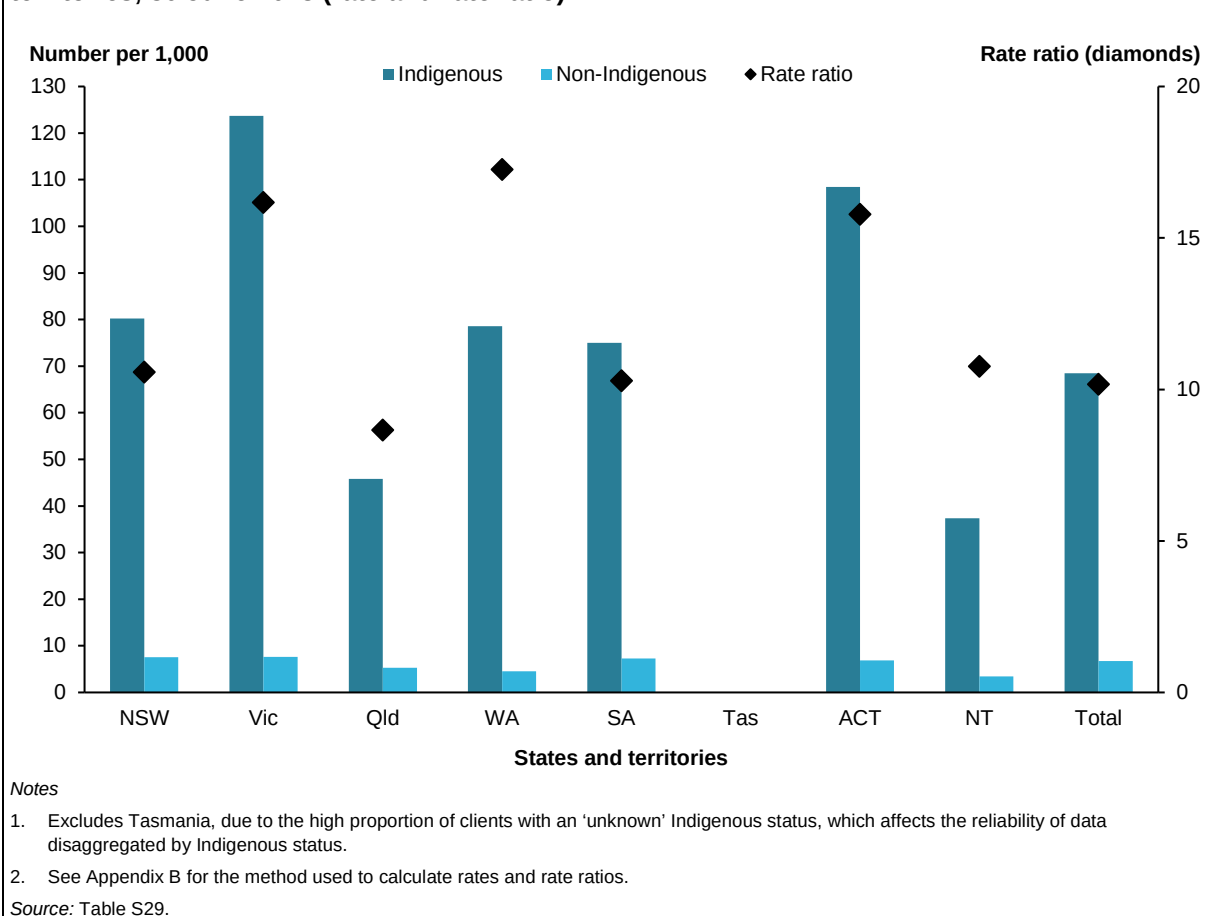
Children aged over 1 were more likely to be on a finalised guardianship or custody order (from 62% of children aged 1–4 to 69% of those aged 15–17), while children aged less than 1 were more likely to be on an interim and temporary order (59%) (Table S27).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

At 30 June 2018, for jurisdictions with available data (excluding Tasmania), the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on orders was 68.5 per 1,000 children, 10 times the rate for non-indigenous children (6.7 per 1,000).

The rate of Indigenous children on orders was higher than the rate for non-Indigenous children across all jurisdictions, with rate ratios varying across jurisdictions (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Children on care and protection orders, by Indigenous status and states and territories, 30 June 2018 (rate and rate ratio)



At 30 June 2018, Indigenous and non-Indigenous children were generally on similar types of orders, with most on finalised guardianship and custody orders (Table S30).

A higher proportion of Indigenous children (71%) were on finalised guardianship and custody orders than non-Indigenous children (59%). But Indigenous children were less likely to be on all other types of orders (Table S30).

4.4 National trends

Children admitted to, and discharged from, orders

The number of children admitted to orders fluctuated over the 5 years to 2017–18, but fell by 9% overall (Figure 4.7).

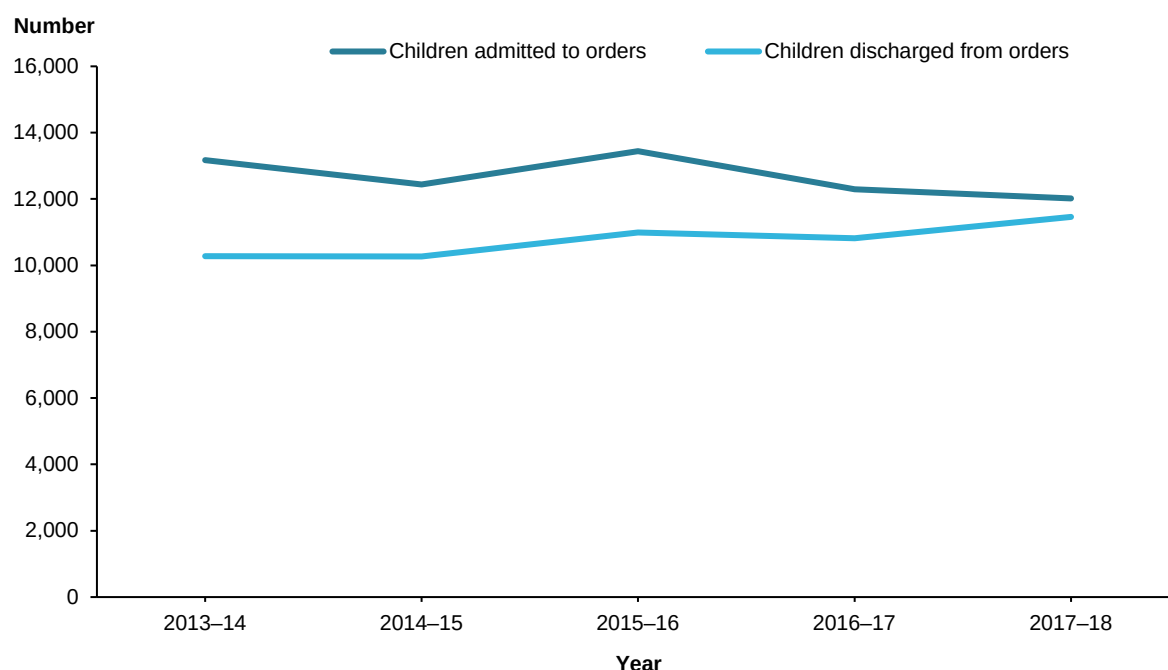
Between 2013–14 and 2015–16, the number of children admitted to orders rose from 13,200 to 13,400. It then fell by 9% to 12,300 in 2016–17, before falling a further 2% to 12,000 in 2017–18 (Table S31).

Between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the number of children discharged from orders rose by 10%, from 10,300 to 11,500 (Table S32).

Over the 5 years, the number of children admitted to orders remained consistently higher than the number discharged, but the difference narrowed (Figure 4.7).

In 2013–14, about 2,900 more children were admitted than were discharged, while in 2017–18, about 560 more children were admitted than were discharged (tables S31 and S32).

Figure 4.7: Trends in children admitted to, and discharged from, care and protection orders, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (number)



Notes

1. A renewal of an existing order is not counted as an admission. A change to an order is counted as an admission. But if a new care and protection order is applied in 5 days or less of the discharge of another order (regardless of the type of order), an admission is not counted.
2. Each child is counted for 1 admission for the year.
3. If a child is on multiple orders, all orders/arrangements must be discharged before a discharge is counted in this figure.

Sources: Tables S31 and S32.

Children on care and protection orders

From 30 June 2014 to 30 June 2018, the rate of children aged 0–17 on care and protection orders rose from 8.7 to 10.1 per 1,000 children (Table S33).

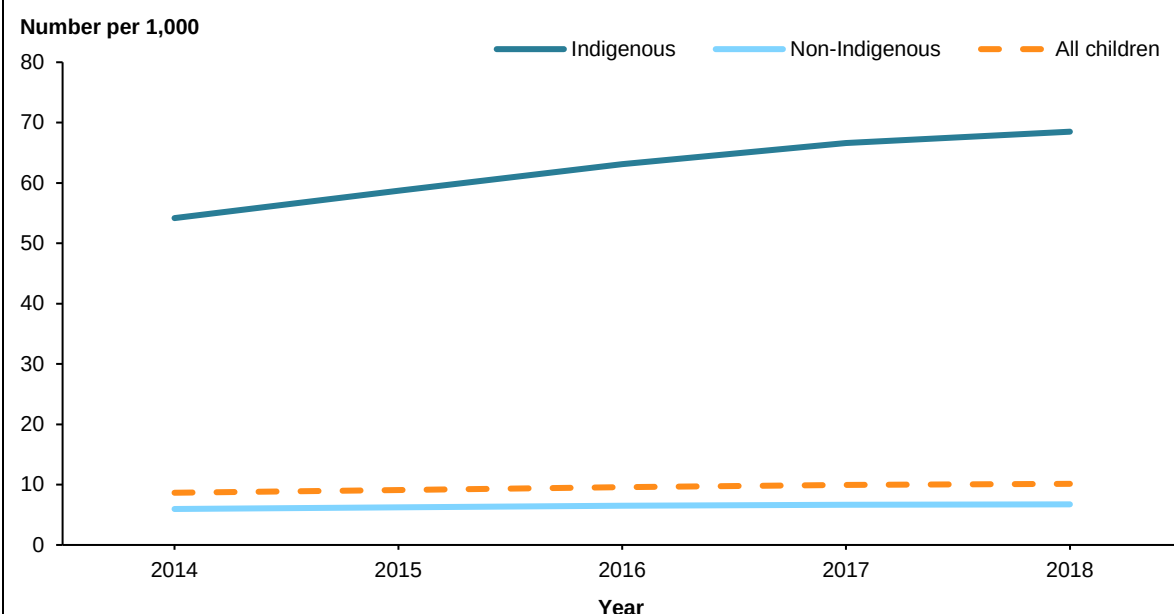
For state and territory trend data on the number and rate of children on care and protection orders between 30 June 2014 and 30 June 2018 see tables A1 and A2.

Over the 4-year period, the number of Indigenous children on care and protection orders rose steadily, from 15,500 on 30 June 2014 to 20,500 on 30 June 2018, with rates rising from 54.2 to 68.5 per 1,000 children (excluding Tasmania).

While the number of non-Indigenous children on care and protection orders rose from 30,000 to 35,300 in the same period, the rate remained relatively stable, rising only slightly from 6.0 to 6.7 per 1,000 children (Figure 4.8).

The substantial increase in the rate of Indigenous children on orders has largely driven the rise in the overall rate of children on orders.

Figure 4.8: Trends in children aged 0–17 on care and protection orders, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2014 to 30 June 2018 (rate)



Notes

1. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
2. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Table S61.

5 Out-of-home care

Out-of-home care is overnight care for children aged 0–17, where the state or territory pays the carer, or offers to pay, but the carer declines the offer (see Box 5.1 for types of out-of-home care).

Excluded from these counts are placements solely funded by disability services, medical services, psychiatric services, juvenile justice facilities, or overnight child care services, and placements in supported accommodation, as well as children in placements with parents where the jurisdiction makes a financial payment.

Box 5.1: Types of out-of-home care

- **Residential care**—Children are placed in a residential building whose purpose is to provide placements for children, and where there are paid staff.
- **Family group homes**—Children are placed in homes provided by a department or community-sector agency that have live-in, non-salaried carers, who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for providing care.
- **Home-based care**—Children are placed in the home of a carer, who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) for expenses for the care of the child. This is broken down into: relative/kinship care, foster care, third-party parental care arrangements, and other home-based out-of-home care.
- **Independent living**—This includes private board and lead tenant households.
- **Other**—This includes placements that are not otherwise classified, and unknown placement types, such as boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels, and defence forces.

Placements for the purpose of respite are included. Respite care is used to provide short-term accommodation for children and young people, where the intention is for the child to return to his or her prior place of residence. This includes respite from birth family and respite from placement.

5.1 Children admitted to, and discharged from, out-of-home care

In 2017–18, nationally:

- about 11,200 children were admitted to out-of-home care—a rate of 2.0 per 1,000 children (Table S34)
- about 10,200 children were discharged from out-of-home care—a rate of 1.8 per 1,000 children (Table S35).

Age

In 2017–18, the rates of admission to out-of-home care were higher for younger children, at 7.2 per 1,000 children for those aged under 1, and 2.2 per 1,000 for those aged 1–4 (Figure 5.1).

Rates of admission to out-of-home care fell as age increased, with the lowest rate being for children aged 15–17 (1.4 per 1,000 children).

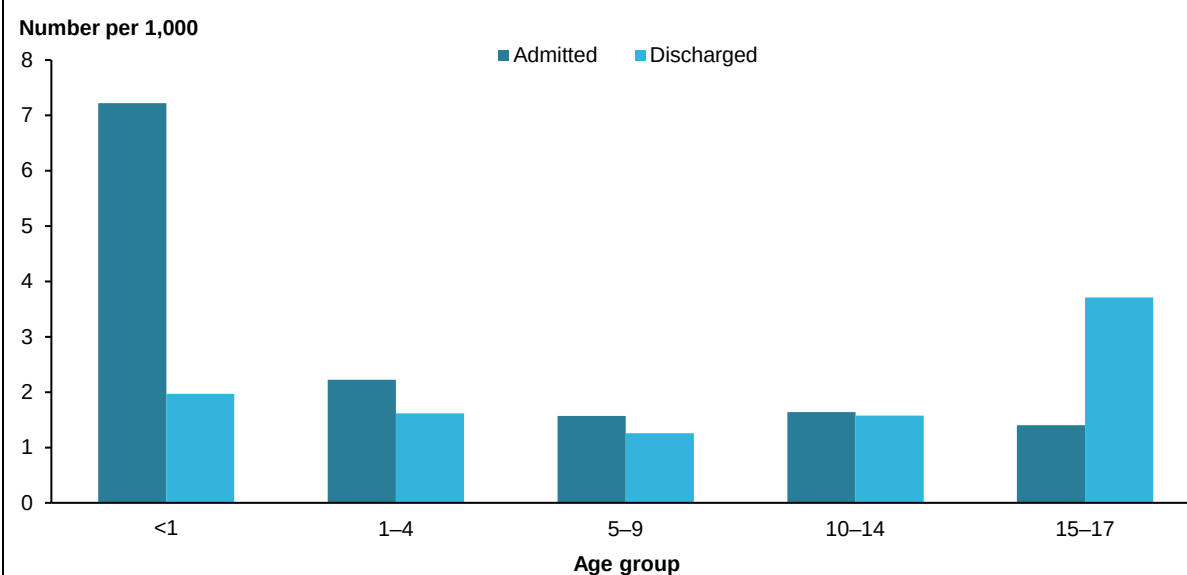
The median age of children admitted to out-of-home care was 6.

Rates of discharges from out-of-home care were highest for children aged 15–17 (3.7 per 1,000 children), but were similar across other age groups (from 1.3 per 1,000 children aged 5–9, to 2.0 per 1,000 children under the age of 1) (Figure 5.1).

The median age of children discharged from out-of-home care was 10.

The different age distribution for admissions and discharges reflects children being admitted to out-of-home care at a younger age and remaining there for longer, as well as children leaving out-of-home care once they turn 18.

Figure 5.1: Children admitted to, and discharged from, out-of-home care, by age group, 2017–18 (rate)



Notes

1. This figure includes all children admitted to out-of-home care for the first time, as well as those children returning to care who had exited care 60 days or more previously. Children admitted to out-of-home care more than once during the year were counted only at the first admission.
2. NSW data excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
3. Out-of-home care data for Victoria and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

Sources: Tables S34 and S35.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

In 2017–18, Indigenous children were admitted to out-of-home care at a rate of 12.8 per 1,000 children, 9 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (1.4 per 1,000). The difference in rates of admission to out-of-home care for Indigenous and non-Indigenous was evident across all age groups (Table S34).

Rates of discharges from out-of-home care during 2017–18 were also higher for Indigenous children (11.2 per 1,000 children) than non-Indigenous children (1.3 per 1,000).

In 2017–18, Indigenous children aged less than 1 were 7 times as likely as non-Indigenous children of the same age to be discharged from out-of-home care, and those aged 10–14 were 10 times as likely (Table S35).

5.2 Children in out-of-home care

At 30 June 2018, nationally, about 45,800 children were in out-of-home care—a rate of 8.2 per 1,000 children (see Table 5.1 for numbers and rates across jurisdictions).

Table 5.1: Children in out-of-home care, by states and territories, 30 June 2018

	NSW ^(a)	Vic ^(b)	Qld	WA ^(c)	SA	Tas ^(d)	ACT ^(e)	NT	Total
Number	17,387	7,954	9,107	4,448	3,695	1,272	826	1,067	45,756
Number per 1,000	9.8	5.7	7.8	7.4	10.1	11.3	8.8	17.0	8.2

(a) NSW data excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).

(b) Victoria data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders from 2017–18.

(c) Western Australia data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders, and include children placed in boarding schools.

(d) Tasmania is not able to include children in care where a financial payment was offered but was declined by the carer meaning Tasmania's data are slightly lower than would be the case if the counting rule was strictly applied. Tasmanian data also exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(e) Out-of-home care data for the Australian Capital Territory includes some young people aged 18 and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to support the completion of schooling without change to the placement.

Note: Rates were calculated using preliminary population estimates based on the 2016 Census, and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous censuses.

Sources: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018; Table S64.

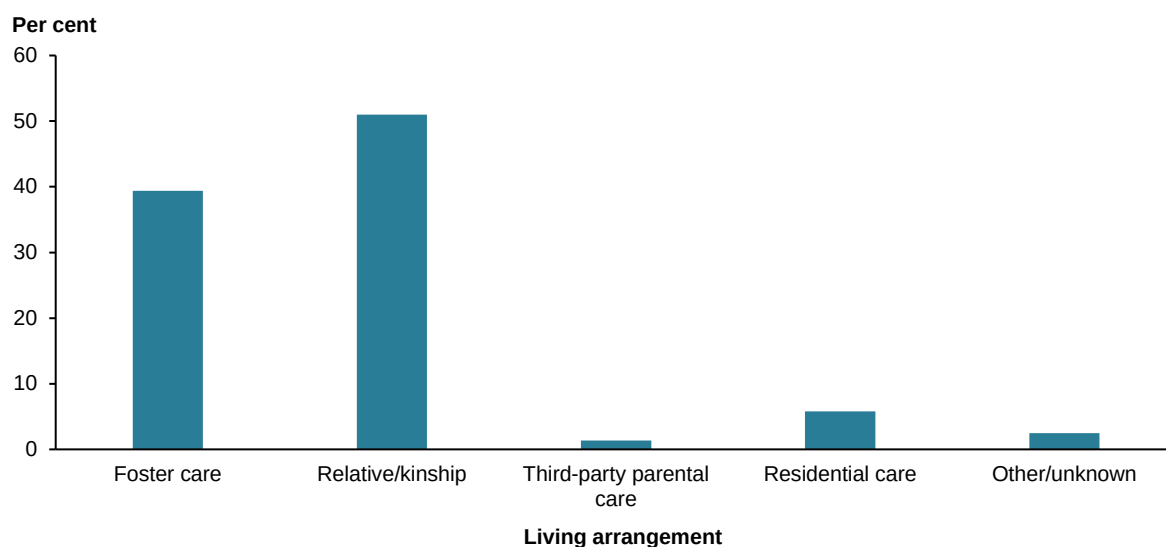
Types of placement

The vast majority of children (93%) in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018 were in home-based care. Of those:

- 51% were in relative/kinship care
- 39% were in foster care
- 1% were in third-party parental care
- 1% were in other types of home-based care (Table S36).

Nationally, about 6% of children in out-of-home care were living in residential care (Figure 5.2). Residential care is mainly used for children who have complex needs. However, in many jurisdictions, priority is given to keeping siblings together, which sometimes results in periods of residential care for larger family groups.

Figure 5.2: Children in out-of-home care, by living arrangements, 30 June 2018 (%)



Notes

1. Variation across jurisdictions in policy/practice for recording living arrangement types affects these results (see Table S36 for more information).
2. NSW data excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
3. Out-of-home care data for Victoria and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

Source: Table S36.

Box 5.2 describes recent development work done to enable the reporting of the relationship between children and their relative/kin carer.

Box 5.2: Preliminary analysis of relationship between relative/kin carer and child

Data on the relationship of relative/kin carers were only available for 5 jurisdictions in 2017–18, representing 31% of children placed with relative/kin carers at 30 June 2018. But these data provide some insight into the main types of relative/kin carers used for such placements.

At 30 June 2018, in the jurisdictions with available data, of children in relative/kinship care:

- 50% were placed with grandparents
- 23% were placed with an aunt/uncle
- 16% in a non-familial relationship (Table S37).

Age and sex

Almost one-third (32%) of children in out-of-home care were aged 10–14, and a similar percentage (30%) were aged 5–9 (Table S38).

The median age of children in out-of-home care was 9, and just over half (52%) of all children in out-of-home care were boys (Table S39).

Across age groups, living arrangements for children in out-of-home care were similar to those for children on care and protection orders.

Children in residential care were older than children in home-based care—85% of children in residential care or family group homes were aged 10 and over, with a median age of 14. The corresponding percentage of children aged 10 and over in home-based care was 45% (Table S40), with a median age of 8.

Only 2% of children in residential care or family group homes in Australia were aged under 5, compared with 24% of those in home-based care.

Disability

Data on disability are not currently uniformly captured across jurisdictions. But given the important overlaps between disability and child protection services, preliminary data on the disability status of children in out-of-home care are presented in Box 5.3.

Box 5.3: Preliminary analysis of disability status of children in out-of-home care

Disability is an umbrella term for any or all of an impairment of body structure or function, a limitation in activities, or a restriction in participation.

Children with a disability are a particularly vulnerable group, especially those in the out-of-home care system (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2016). To date national data on children in out-of-home care with a disability has been sparse.

Disability status was identified in the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children second action plan as being of interest for child protection indicator reporting, and continues to be an area of interest under the fourth action plan (FaHCSIA 2012; DSS 2015b).

In 2017–18, data on the disability status of children in out-of-home care were available for 6 jurisdictions, representing 75% of children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018.

These data showed that, overall, 14% of children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018 were reported as having a disability (Table S41).

As disability is a multidimensional and complex concept, there might be differences across jurisdictions in how disability is defined, including which health conditions are classified as a disability. There are also differences in how information about disability is captured in jurisdictional processes and client information systems.

Remoteness area

More than half (54%) of the children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018 lived in *Major cities*, and two-fifths (42%) lived in *Inner/Outer regional* areas combined (based on postcode of living arrangement) (Table S42a).

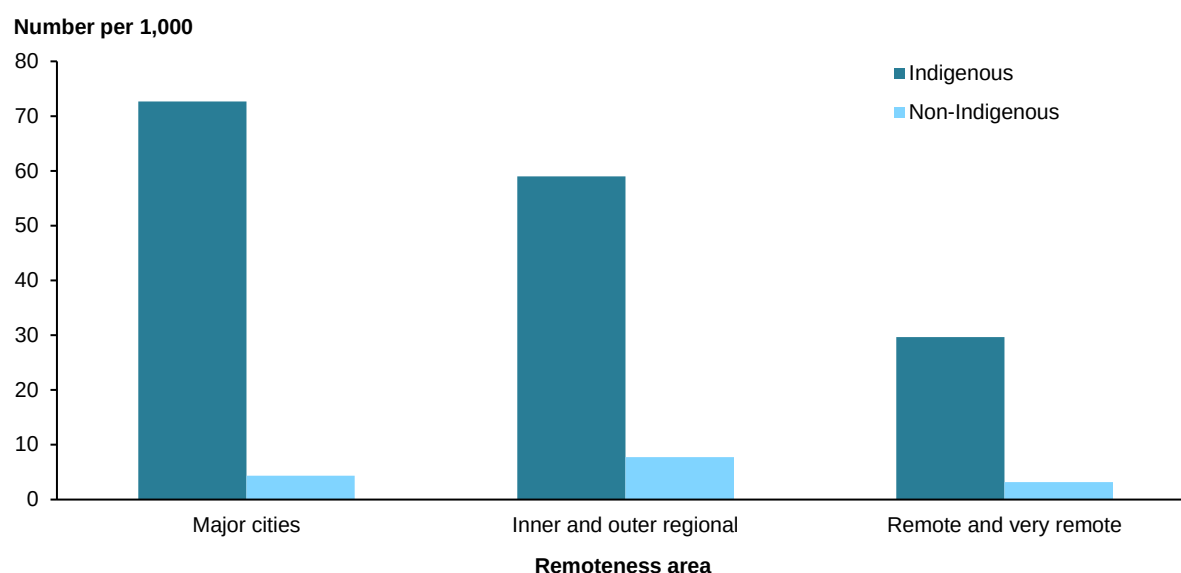
Children living in *Remote/Very remote* areas combined were twice as likely as those in *Major cities* to be in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018.

The rates of Indigenous children in out-of-home care were higher across all remoteness areas than the rates for non-Indigenous children (Figure 5.3).

In *Major cities*, Indigenous children (72.7 per 1,000 children) were almost 17 times as likely as non-Indigenous children (4.4 per 1,000) to be in out-of-home care at 30 June (Figure 5.3).

In *Remote/Very remote* areas combined, Indigenous children were 9 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care.

Figure 5.3: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status and remoteness of living arrangement, 30 June 2018 (rate)



Notes

1. Aggregated categories are reported in this figure for *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas, and for *Remote* and *Very remote* areas, due to availability of population data used as the denominator for calculating rates.
2. The remoteness areas divide Australia into broad geographic regions that share common characteristics of remoteness for statistical purposes (ABS 2016c). Remoteness areas are calculated using the postcode of a child's living arrangement. For more information, see Appendix A or ABS 2016c.
3. Some remoteness areas are not found in all states and territories.
4. Tasmanian clients with known Indigenous status are included in this figure, because remoteness population data disaggregated by Indigenous status and state are not available.
5. NSW data excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
6. Out-of-home care data for Victoria and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

Source: Table S42b.

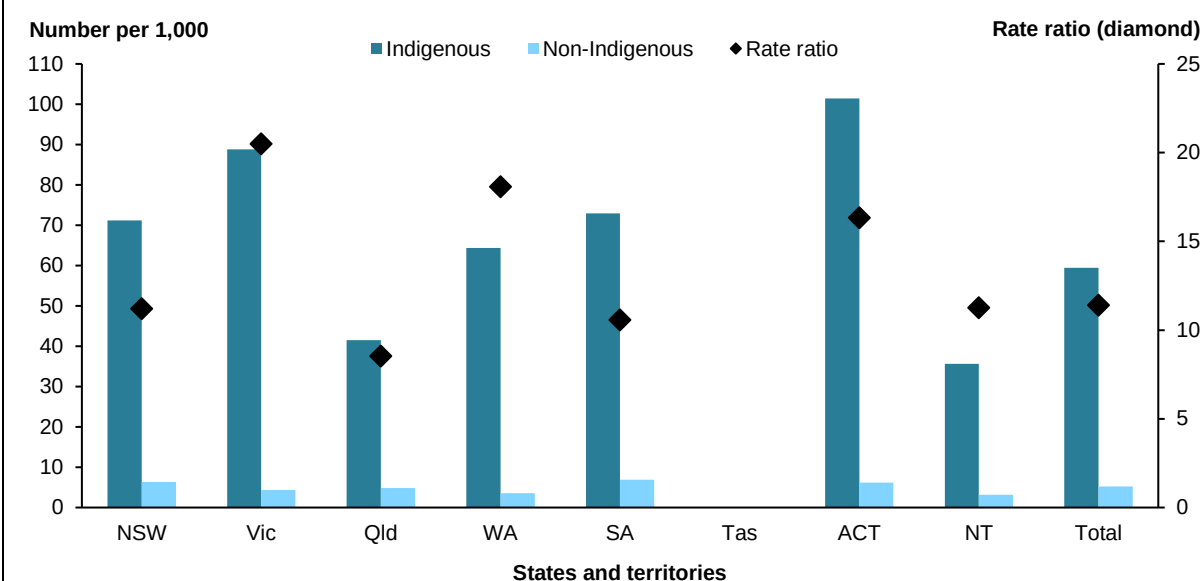
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

At 30 June 2018, the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was 59.4 per 1,000 children, 11 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (5.2 per 1,000).

In all jurisdictions with available data (excluding Tasmania), the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was higher than that for non-Indigenous children (Figure 5.4). This difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous was evident across all age groups, but out-of-home rates for Indigenous children alone varied by age group.

Indigenous children aged 10–14 had the highest rate of out-of-home care (71.5 per 1,000 children), while those aged less than 1 had the lowest rate (25.7 per 1,000) (Table S44).

Figure 5.4: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status and states and territories, 30 June 2018 (rate and rate ratio)



Notes

1. NSW data excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
2. Out-of-home care data for Victoria and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
3. Excludes Tasmania due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
4. See Appendix B for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Table S43.

Box 5.4 describes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, which has been adopted by all jurisdictions in legislation and policy.

Box 5.4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

The purpose of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is to ensure Indigenous children remain connected to their family, community, culture, and country.

Core elements include prevention, partnership, placement, participation, and connection.

The principle outlines a preference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be placed with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when they are placed outside their family (Lock 1997; Tilbury et al. 2013).

The principle has the following order of preference, requiring Indigenous children to be placed:

- with the child's extended family and kinship networks
- within the child's Indigenous community
- with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Where placement options outlined in the principle are not optimal for a child's safety and wellbeing, the child may be placed in an alternative care arrangement.

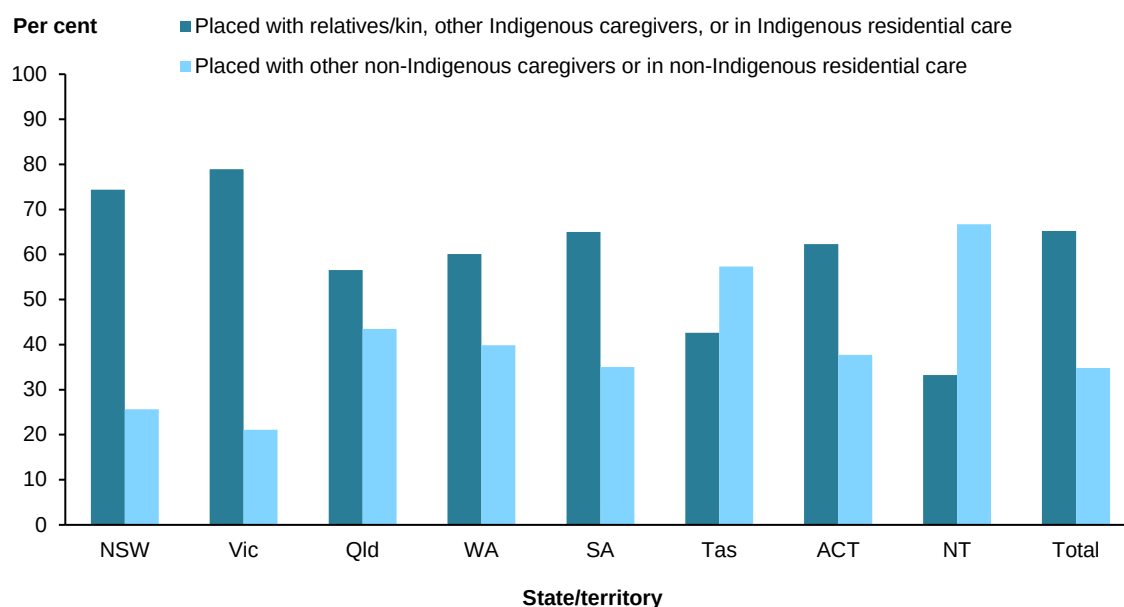
Usually, this is done only after extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and/or organisations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates, community services ministers, and recent Royal Commissions involving child protection matters in Australia have recognised the importance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principle, and highlighted the need to improve adherence to all 5 elements, and the monitoring of this.

The impact of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is reflected in the relatively high proportions of Indigenous children who were placed either with Indigenous caregivers or with relatives in many jurisdictions (Figure 5.5).

In 2017–18, 65% of Indigenous children were placed with relatives/kin, other Indigenous caregivers, or in Indigenous residential care. This percentage is similar to that reported in previous years.

Figure 5.5: Indigenous children in out-of-home care, by relationship of carer and states and territories, 30 June 2018 (%)



Notes

1. This figure does not include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were living independently, or for whom relationship of carer and/or their Indigenous status were unknown.
2. Family group homes and residential care are reported under 'Other caregiver'.
3. NSW data excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
4. Out-of-home care data for Victoria and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
5. In Tasmania, a high number of carers whose Indigenous status is unknown might affect the identification of children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.
6. Children for whom relationship of carer and/or their Indigenous status were unknown are included in 'Placed with non-Indigenous relatives/kin, other Indigenous caregivers, or in Indigenous residential care'.

Source: Table S45.

Care and protection order status

At 30 June 2018, nationally, of children in out-of-home care:

- 93% were also on care and protection orders
- less than 1% were on another type of order
- 6% were not on an order (Table S46).

Length of time continuously in care

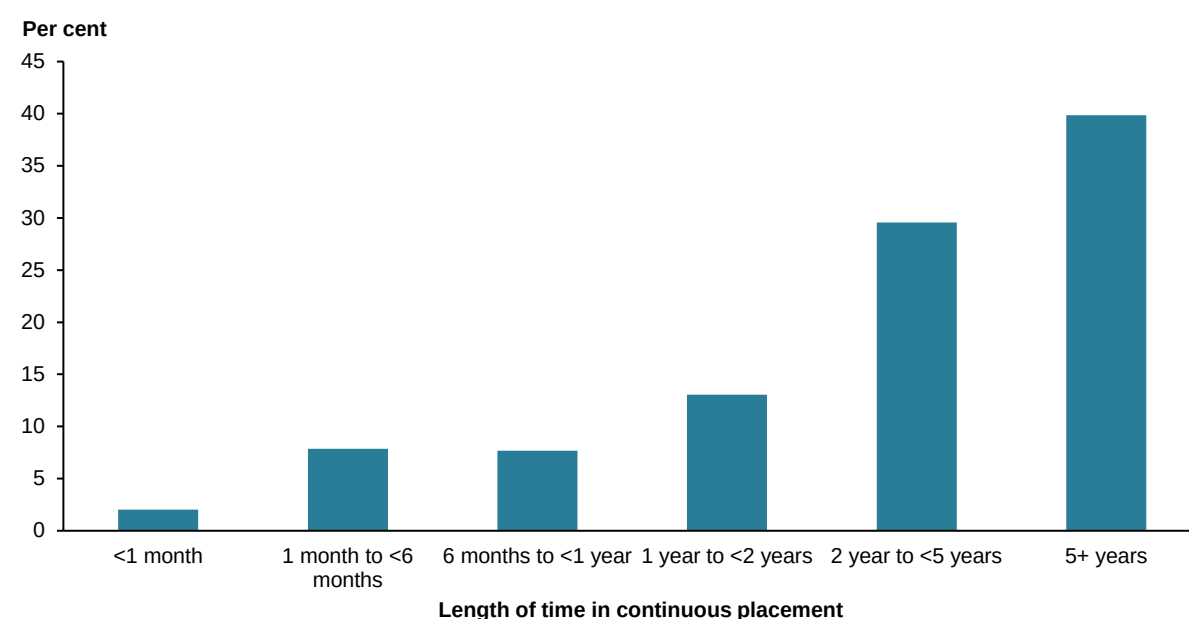
Of the approximately 45,800 children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018, most (82%) had been continuously in out-of-home care for 1 year or more (Table S47). This included:

- 30% who had been in out-of-home care for 2–5 years
- 40% who had been in out-of-home care for 5 years or more (Figure 5.6).

About 18% of children had been in out-of-home care for less than 1 year.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous children spent similar timeframes in out-of-home care, with at least 80% in both groups spending 1 year or more continuously in care, and less than 20% spending less than 1 year continuously in care.

Figure 5.6: Children in out-of-home care, by length of time continuously in care, 30 June 2018 (%)



Notes

1. If a child has a return home or a break of less than 60 days before returning to the same or different placement, he or she is considered to be continuously in care during this period.
2. NSW data excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
3. Out-of-home care data for Victoria and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

Source: Table S47.

Long-term alternative care

Reunification (or safe return home) is the policy priority for children in out-of-home care across all states and territories. But reunification is not achieved for some children, and alternative permanent care arrangements are needed (see Box 5.5).

National data are not currently available on the number of children who exited out-of-home care and were reunified with their parents. But work is under way to help future reporting. Policies for permanency planning indicate that children who have been in care for 2 years or more need a decision on their long-term care arrangements (AIHW 2016b).

Box 5.5: Permanency planning and alternative care arrangements

Permanency planning refers to the processes that state and territory departments responsible for child protection use to achieve a stable long-term care arrangement.

The actions taken to achieve long-term care arrangements can be broadly grouped as reunification, third-party parental responsibility orders, long-term finalised guardianship/custody orders, and adoption.

Information on third-party parental responsibility orders and guardianship/custody orders is presented in Box 4.1.

Reunification

Reunification is a planned process to safely return a child home after time in care to be with his or her birth parent(s), family, or former guardian (and enabling a child to stay). This occurs when it is in the child's best interests, and where it will safeguard long-term stability and permanency (AIHW 2016b).

By returning to the family of origin, the child may be deemed to have exited care. Parental rights and responsibilities may resume as normal, although, in some cases, a care and protection order can remain in place for some time.

Known carer adoption

Known carer adoption is adoption by the foster parent(s) or other non-relative(s) who has been caring for a child in out-of-home care, and been responsible for the daily care and control of the child for the period specified by the relevant state/territory department before the adoption (AIHW 2018a).

In some jurisdictions, adoption from care might not be viewed as part of permanency planning, or, while it is legally available, it might rarely be used in practice—in particular for Indigenous children and young people.

Children remaining in out-of-home care

Age and Indigenous status

Approximately 31,800 (69%) of the 45,800 children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018 had been in long-term care (2 years or more) (Table S47).

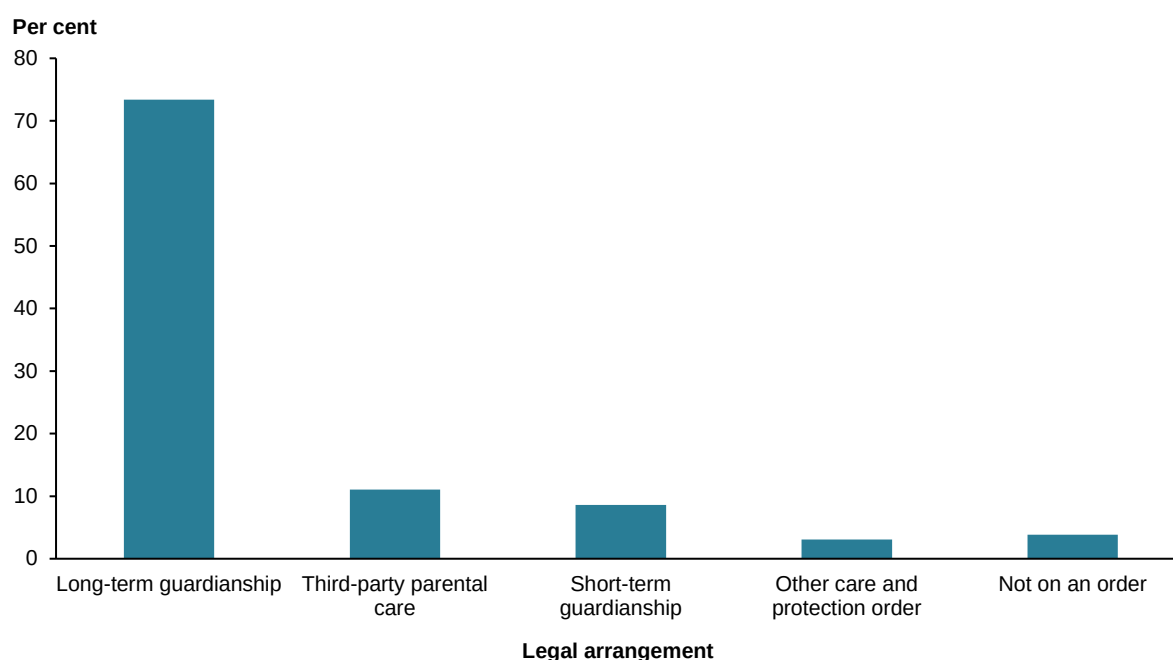
Most (70%) were aged 5–14, with a median age of 10, and 40% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Table S48).

Legal arrangement

Of children who had been in care for 2 years or more:

- most (84%) were on a long-term care and protection order
- 11% were in a third-party parental care arrangement—home-based care where parental responsibility had been transferred to the carer
- almost three-quarters (73%) were on long-term finalised guardianship or custody orders (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7: Children in long-term out-of-home care, by legal arrangement, 30 June 2018 (%)



Notes

1. This figure only includes children who had been continuously in out-of-home care for 2 years or more at 30 June 2018, and excludes New South Wales, as data were not available.
2. Out-of-home care data for Victoria and Western Australia exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

Source: Table S49.

Most (89%) children on a long-term guardianship or custody order were living in home-based care with a foster or relative/kinship carer. A smaller percentage (8%) were living in residential care or family group homes (Table S49).

Similar patterns were generally seen across age groups, though children aged 2–4 were less likely to be on a long-term third-party parental responsibility order, and more likely to be on short-term guardianship/custody orders than older children.

Young people aged 15–17 were more likely to be on a long-term guardianship order and living in residential care than other children (Table S50).

Children living in home-based care (that is, in a family setting with a carer) have better developmental outcomes than children living in residential care with paid, rostered staff (AIFS et al. 2015; Cashmore 2011; DHHS 2014). Residential care may be used for children who have complex needs, or to keep large sibling groups together.

Children adopted from out-of-home care

An alternative arrangement that may be used to achieve permanency for children in out-of-home care is adoption—specifically, known carer adoption (see Box 5.5).

In 2017–18, 147 known carer adoption orders were finalised in Australia (AIHW 2018a). Australian jurisdictions differ in the extent to which they use adoption to improve permanency for children in out-of-home care (AIHW 2016b).

The majority of carer adoptions were finalised in New South Wales, reflecting that state's policies, which promote adoption to achieve stability for children under the long-term care of state child protective services when family restoration was not considered appropriate (AIHW 2018a).

5.3 National trends

Children admitted to out-of-home care

Between 2013–14 and 2015–16 the number of children admitted to out-of-home care rose by 16% (from 11,100 to 12,800). This was followed by a fall of 13% over the following 2 years, to 11,200 in 2017–18 (Table S51).

The overall rate of admissions remained relatively stable over the same 5 years, at about 2.0 per 1,000 children.

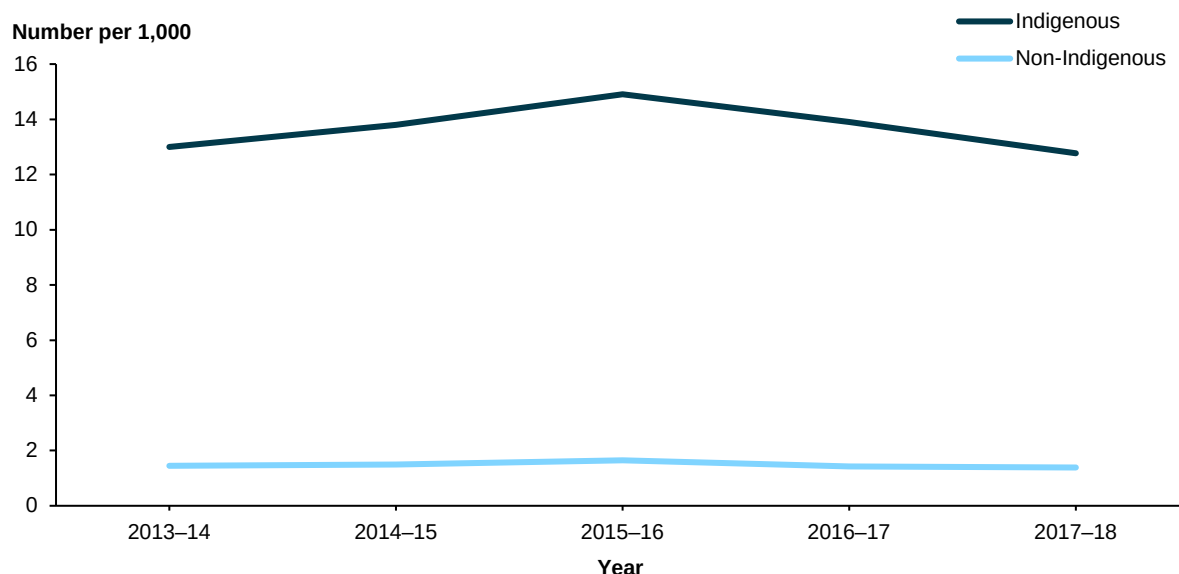
The number of admissions has consistently outnumbered discharges—in 2017–18, 952 more children were admitted than were discharged (tables S51 and S53).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Between 2013–14 and 2015–16, the rate of Indigenous children admitted to out-of-home care rose from 13.0 to 14.9 per 1,000 children, then fell to 13.9 per 1,000 in 2016–17, and to 12.8 per 1,000 in 2017–18 (Figure 5.8).

The rate of admissions for non-Indigenous children remained stable between 2013–14 and 2017–18, at about 1.5 per 1,000.

Figure 5.8: Trends in children admitted to out-of-home care, by Indigenous status, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (rate)



Notes

1. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
2. New South Wales data from 2014–15 excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
3. For 2017–18, Victoria out-of-home care counts exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
4. From 2015–16, Western Australia out-of-home care counts exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
5. This figure includes all children admitted to out-of-home care for the first time in the period, as well as those returning to care, who had exited care 60 days or more previously. Children admitted to out-of-home care more than once during the year were only counted at the first admission.

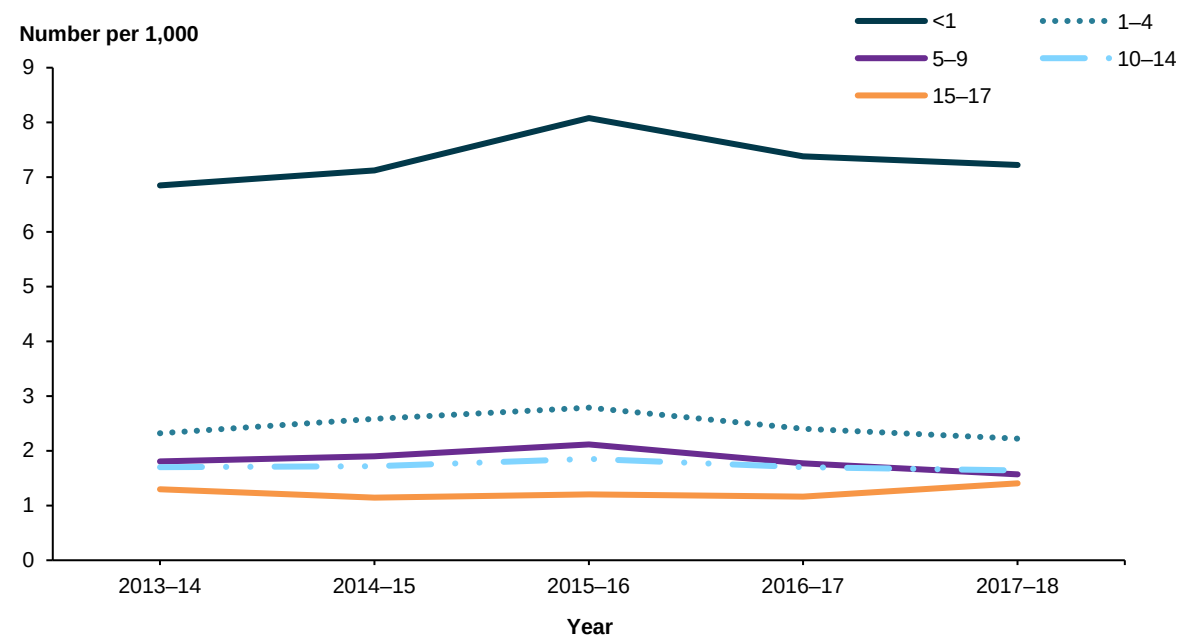
Source: Table S51.

Age groups

Since 2013–14, the rates of admission to out-of-home care for children aged under 1 were consistently higher than the rates for any other age group (Figure 5.9)—rates rose from 6.8 per 1,000 children in 2013–14 to 8.1 in 2015–16, then fell to 7.4 per 1,000 in 2016–17, and 7.2 per 1,000 in 2017–18.

The rates for the other age groups were more stable over the 5-year period, with a slight peak across age groups during 2015–16.

Figure 5.9: Trends in children admitted to out-of-home care, by age group, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (rate)



Notes

1. This figure includes all children admitted to out-of-home care for the first time in the period, as well as those returning to care, who had exited care 60 days or more previously. Children admitted to out-of-home care more than once during the year were only counted at the first admission.
2. New South Wales data from 2014–15 excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
3. For 2017–18, Victoria out-of-home care counts exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
4. From 2015–16, Western Australia out-of-home care counts exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

Source: Table S52.

Children discharged from out-of-home care

The number of children discharged from out-of-home care fluctuated between 2013–14 and 2017–18, largely due to legislative/policy changes in New South Wales in 2014–15 and Victoria in 2017–18.

But over the 5 years, the overall rate of children discharged (excluding the spike in 2014–15) was stable, at about 1.8 per 1,000 children.

The rate of discharges for Indigenous children rose from 9.0 per 1,000 in 2013–14 to 11.2 per 1,000 in 2017–18, whereas the rate for non-Indigenous children was relatively stable—ranging from 1.1 per 1,000 to 1.5 per 1,000 (Table S53).

Between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the rates of children aged 15–17 discharged from out-of-home care were consistently higher than for any other age group (Table S54).

Across the 5 years, the rates of discharges for children aged 15–17 were relatively stable, at about 3.7 per 1,000 children, while for the other age groups, rates ranged from 1.3 per 1,000 for children aged 5–9 to 2.0 per 1,000 for children aged under 1.

Children in out-of-home care

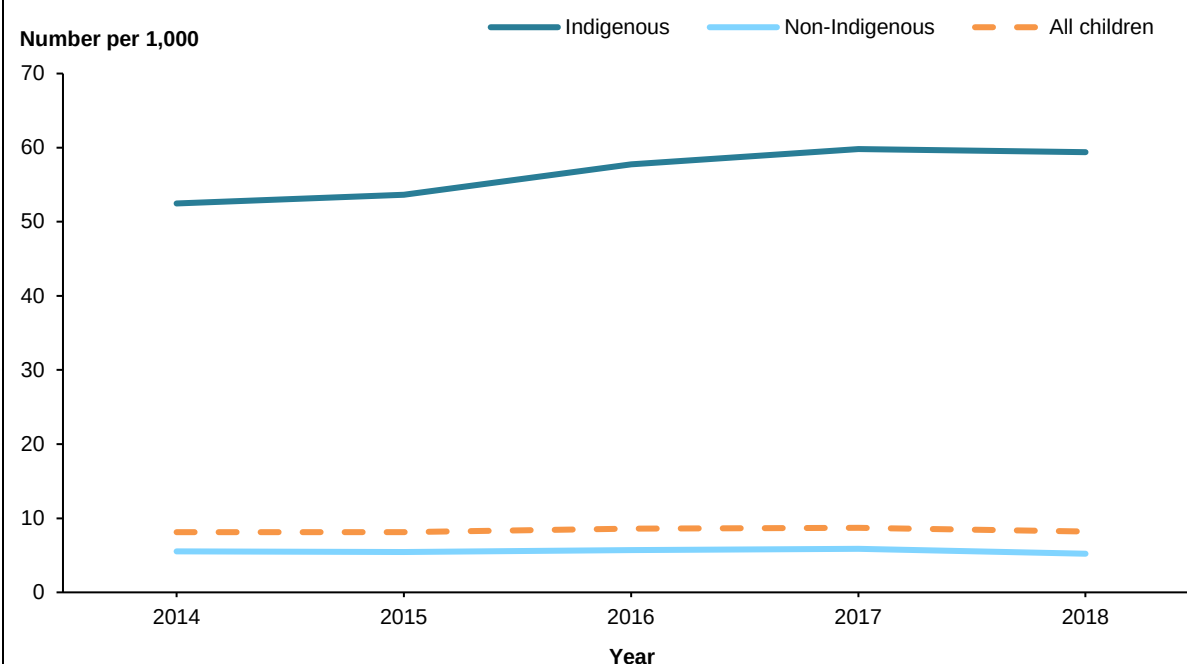
Nationally, the rate of children in out-of-home care in Australia at 30 June rose from 8.1 per 1,000 children in 2014 to 8.2 per 1,000 in 2018 (Figure 5.10; Table S55). Overall, about 2,700 more children (a rise of 6%) were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018 than at 30 June 2014.

For state/territory trend data on the number and rate of children on out-of-home care between 30 June 2014 and 30 June 2018, see tables A1 and A2.

Increases in the rate of children in out-of-home care might reflect the cumulative impact of children being admitted to, and remaining in, out-of-home care. This is evident in the high proportion of children who have been in care for 5 years or more (Table S47).

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding Tasmania), the rate of Indigenous children placed in out-of-home care rose steadily between 30 June 2014 and 30 June 2018—from 52.5 to 59.4 per 1,000 children. The non-Indigenous rate remained relatively stable, ranging from 5.5 to 5.2 per 1,000 children (Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2014 to 30 June 2018 (rate)



Notes

1. Excludes Tasmania, due to the high proportion of clients with an 'unknown' Indigenous status, which affects the reliability of data disaggregated by Indigenous status.
2. New South Wales data from 2014–15 excludes children and young people who are on independent care of their guardian (third-parental responsibility care arrangement: non out-of-home care funded).
3. For 2017–18, Victoria out-of-home care counts exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.
4. From 2015–16, Western Australia out-of-home care counts exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

Source: Table S61.

6 Carers

Carers are people who have been screened and received authorisation to provide placements in their private households for children in funded out-of-home care.

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), in 2017–18, the vast majority (93%) of children in out-of-home care were placed in home-based care, primarily with foster carers or with relatives/kin (see Chapter 5). A smaller number of carers also provide other types of care, including respite and long-term guardianship care (see Box 6.1 for carer types).

Box 6.1: Carer types

Respite carers—Carers who provide short-term accommodation for children and young people where the intention is for the child to return to their prior place of residence. Some carers are authorised to provide respite care only. Respite placements may include:

- *respite from birth family*—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 temporarily, as a family support mechanism to prevent entry into full-time care, as part of the reunification process, or as a formal shared care arrangement)
- *respite from placement*—where a child spends regular, short and agreed periods of time with a carer other than their primary carer.

Long-term guardianship carers—Carers who have been screened/authorised to have a child placed with them under an order where parental responsibility is transferred to a third party. Long-term guardianship differs from foster or relative/kinship care in that the carer assumes parental responsibility for a long-term period (usually to the age of 18).

Foster and relative/kinship care—One or more carers who provide overnight care in a private household to a child who is living apart from their natural or adoptive parents.

- **Foster carers**—Carers who have been screened/authorised and reimbursed (or were offered but declined reimbursement) by the state/territory for the care of a foster child. There are varying degrees of reimbursement made to foster carers.
- **Relative/kinship carers**—Carers who have been screened/authorised to have relative/kin placed with them. The carer is a relative (other than parents), considered to be family or a close friend, or is a member of the child or young person's community (in accordance with their culture) who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) by the state/territory for the care of the child.

State and territory differences in policies and practices in relation to foster care and relative/kinship care should be taken into account when interpreting the data. Some notable differences include:

- degrees of reimbursement made to foster carers vary—for example, some carers are paid a wage beyond the reimbursement of expenses
- a carer who is authorised to provide both foster and relative/kinship care might be included in the count of both foster and relative/kinship carer
- in some jurisdictions, respite carers known to the department are registered as either 'general foster carers' or 'relative carers', so might be included in the scope of these collections.

While the majority of carer households are authorised to provide foster or relative/kinship care, a smaller number of carers also provide other types of care, including respite and long-term guardianship care (see Box 6.2).

Box 6.2: Placements provided by all carer households at 30 June 2018

Expanding reporting to count the total number of unique carer households can give insight into the total number of children placed in the household, regardless of the placement type, as some carer households might be approved/authorised to provide more than 1 care type.

It also allows information about carer households that provide placements other than foster or relative/kinship care to be included in the count.

Of the jurisdictions with available data (excluding NSW), there were approximately 15,400 unique carer households with a placement at 30 June 2018. Of these, 58% had 1 child placed with them, 40% had 2–4 children placed and 2% had 5 or more children placed with them (Table S56).

6.1 Foster and relative/kinship carer households

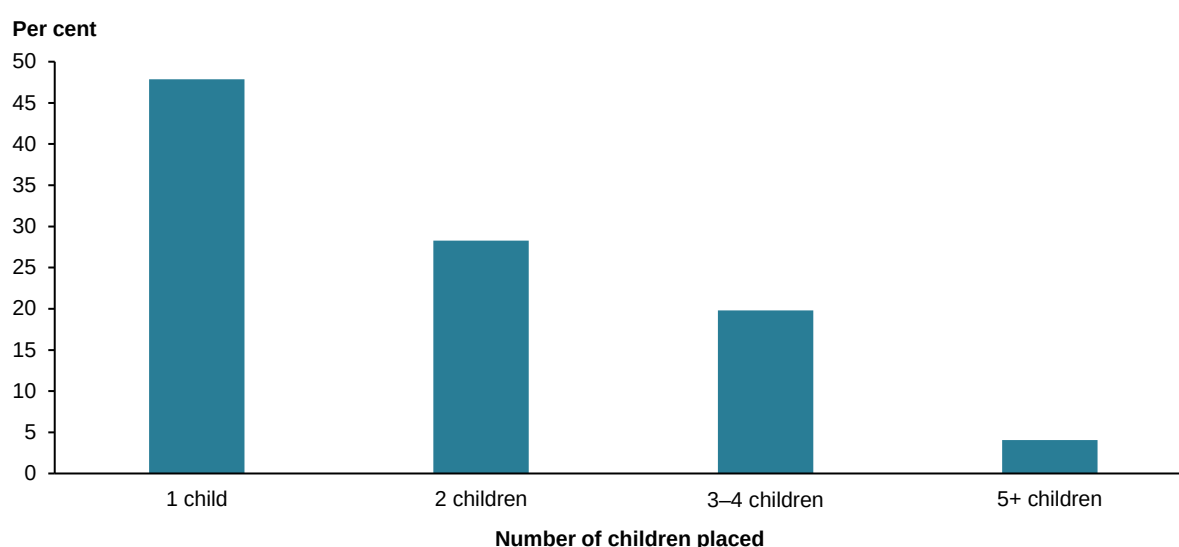
Number of children placed in foster carer households

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), about 5,900 foster care households had 1 or more foster care placements at 30 June 2018.

Of these households, more than half (52%) had multiple children placed with them. Of households with multiple placements, almost half (48%) had 2–4 children placed, while 4% had 5 or more children placed with them (Table S57; Figure 6.1). These findings are similar to those for 2016–17 (AIHW 2018b).

Households with multiple child placements might partially reflect that, in many jurisdictions, priority is given to placing siblings together.

Figure 6.1: Foster carer households with a placement, by number of foster children placed, 30 June 2018 (%)



Note: Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.

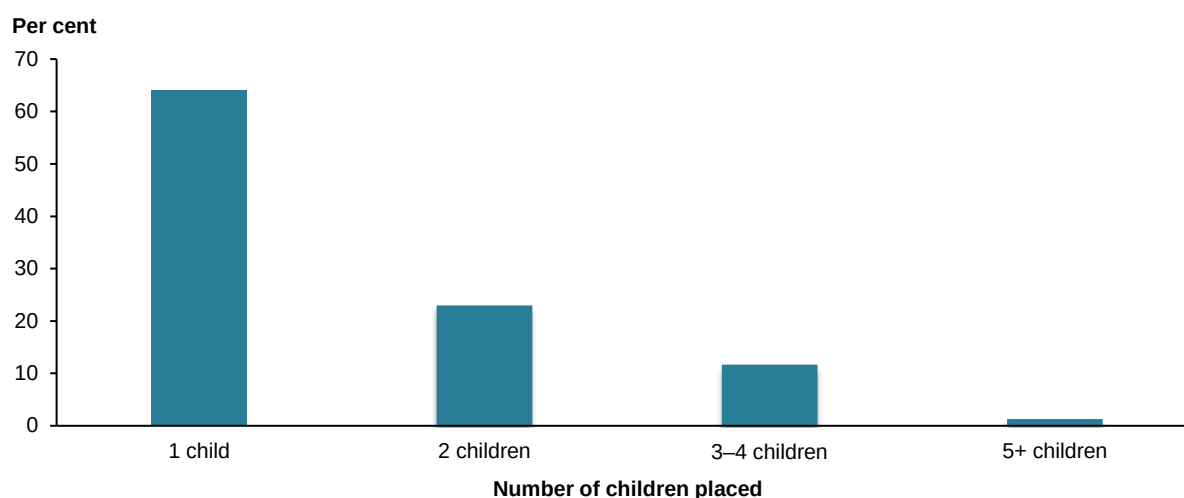
Source: Table S57.

Number of children placed in relative/kinship carer households

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), at 30 June 2018:

- 64% of relative/kinship carer households had 1 child placed with them compared with 48% of foster carer households
- 35% of the approximately 8,400 relative/kinship carer households had 2–4 children placed with them
- 1% of relative/kinship carer households had 5 or more children placed with them (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2: Relative/kinship carer households with a placement, by number of children placed, 30 June 2018 (%)



Note: Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting.

Source: Table S58.

6.2 Household commencements and exits

Foster carer households

Among jurisdictions with available data, 1,400 households commenced foster care and 1,500 exited foster care in 2017–18 (Table 6.1). With the need for foster carers increasing, the attraction and retention of appropriately skilled foster carers continues to be a high priority across Australia (COAG 2009).

Relative/kinship carer households

Among jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), 4,700 households commenced relative/kinship care and about 3,800 exited relative/kinship care in 2017–18 (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Households commencing and exiting care, by states and territories, 2017–18 (number)

Households	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld ^(b)	WA	SA	Tas ^(c)	ACT	NT	Total
Households commencing foster care	n.a.	375	388	310	161	53	37	57	1,381
Households exiting foster care	n.a.	606	418	268	69	57	3	67	1,488
Households commencing relative/kinship care	n.a.	2,828	534	687	387	99	87	78	4,700
Households exiting relative/kinship care	n.a.	2,529	523	537	61	67	25	51	3,793

(a) Excludes New South Wales, which implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. New South Wales is working to improve quality and completeness of data for future reporting.

(b) Queensland data do not include provisionally approved carer households that have started providing foster or relative/kinship care, but are yet to receive approval as a foster or relative/kinship carer.

(c) In Tasmania, delays in administrative processes can result in carers being maintained as approved in the system when they are no longer accepting child placements. For the purpose of reporting households exiting foster or relative/kinship care, if no termination date is recorded, a foster or relative/kinship carer household that has not had a placement in 12 months is considered to have exited.

Note: Excludes respite placements.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

7 Intensive family support services

This chapter provides information on children commencing intensive family support services funded by the state and territory departments responsible for child protection.

Intensive family support services aim to prevent imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers due to child protection concerns, and to reunify families where separation has already occurred.

In 2017–18, 335 intensive family support service providers delivered services across 377 locations.

Box 7.1 describes the criteria for families to use intensive family support services.

Box 7.1: Intensive family support services

To be included in the intensive family support services data collection, services must provide:

- services that explicitly aim to prevent separation or to reunify families
- a variety of services as part of an integrated strategy focusing on improving family functioning and skills, rather than just 1 type of service, such as emergency or respite care
- intensive services, averaging at least 4 hours of service per week for a specified short-term period (usually less than 180 days).

Generally, referrals will come from the statutory agency, and will have been identified through the child protection process.

Currently, the national data collection is limited to intensive family support services, and does not include other types of family support services that do not meet these criteria.

Work was previously done to develop a Treatment and Support Services National Minimum Data Set, but this has not been implemented for national reporting due to limited data availability and quality.

7.1 Children commencing services

In 2017–18, about 33,100 children aged 0–17 commenced intensive family support services (Table 7.1). Of these, 2 in 5 (38%) were aged under 5 (among jurisdictions with available data).

The vast majority (85%) of children who commenced an intensive family support service were living with their parents (Table S59).

The children commencing intensive family support services might also appear in the child protection statistics presented throughout this report, but the extent of this overlap cannot currently be measured in the national data.

Table 7.1: Children commencing intensive family support services, by age at commencement of service and states and territories, 2017–18

Age group	NSW	Vic	Qld ^(a)	WA	SA	Tas ^(b)	ACT	NT ^(c)	Total ^(d)
Number									
0–4	5,291	3,564	2,270	284	368	513	122	n.a.	12,412
5–9	3,258	3,050	2,578	204	246	515	105	n.a.	9,956
10–17	1,926	3,975	2,799	180	275	626	70	n.a.	9,851
Unknown	25	287	0	2	0	0	0	n.a.	314
Total	10,500	10,876	7,647	670	889	1,654	297	585	33,118
%									
0–4	50.4	32.8	29.7	42.4	41.4	31.0	41.1	..	38.2
5–9	31.0	28.0	33.7	30.4	27.7	31.1	35.4	..	30.6
10–17	18.3	36.5	36.6	26.9	30.9	37.8	23.6	..	30.3
Unknown	0.2	2.6	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	..	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Children counted in this table for Queensland include those supported by Intensive Family Support services. It also includes a portion of children supported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services.

(b) Services in Tasmania are provided under the title of Integrated Family Support Services. Tasmanian data are compiled from aggregate data provided by community sector organisations. It should be noted that as information is not provided by all in-scope community sector organisations and the data provided are not validated, the results should be interpreted with caution.

(c) Age breakdowns for children commencing intensive family support services were unavailable for the Northern Territory.

(d) The proportions for the total column exclude Northern Territory counts from the calculation, as age breakdowns were unavailable.

Notes

1. Percentages in the table might not add to 100, due to rounding.

2. New South Wales data are an estimate, due to an increase in additional intensive family support services program funding and places.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

Appendix A: State/territory trend data

Table A1: Children in the child protection system, by states and territories, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (number)

Year	NSW ^{(a)(b)}	Vic ^(c)	Qld ^(d)	WA ^(e)	SA ^(f)	Tas ^{(g)(h)}	ACT ⁽ⁱ⁾	NT	Total
Number									
Children receiving child protection services^(j)									
2013–14	53,250	28,949	29,585	15,385	7,083	2,609	1,635	4,527	143,023
2014–15	59,092	33,430	27,163	15,909	6,309	2,560	1,703	5,814	151,980
2015–16	64,330	37,357	27,842	15,375	6,204	2,579	2,388	6,100	162,175
2016–17	66,689	40,415	28,634	15,282	6,194	2,605	2,008	6,525	168,352
2017–18	52,146	43,333	29,573	14,947	6,538	2,439	2,251	7,385	158,612
Children who were the subject of substantiations^{(j)(k)}									
2013–14	15,074	11,395	6,685	3,053	2,190	712	341	1,394	40,844
2014–15	15,022	13,300	5,869	3,382	1,908	833	386	1,757	42,457
2015–16	17,282	14,154	5,621	4,198	1,641	795	449	1,574	45,714
2016–17	18,919	15,488	5,767	4,633	1,526	755	317	1,910	49,315
2017–18	n.a.	17,245	5,884	4,530	1,649	702	277	1,744	32,031
Children on care and protection orders^(l)									
2013–14	17,242	9,233	9,131	4,471	2,786	1,188	705	990	45,746
2014–15	18,496	10,135	9,269	4,808	3,019	1,183	747	1,073	48,730
2015–16	19,876	10,962	9,580	4,946	3,448	1,248	823	1,089	51,972
2016–17	20,453	12,354	9,716	5,138	3,686	1,316	889	1,114	54,666
2017–18	20,331	13,303	9,955	5,542	3,872	1,380	904	1,125	56,412
Children in out-of-home care^(l)									
2013–14	18,192	7,710	8,185	3,723	2,631	1,054	606	908	43,009
2014–15	16,843	8,567	8,448	3,954	2,838	1,061	671	1,017	43,399
2015–16	17,800	9,705	8,670	4,100	3,243	1,150	748	1,032	46,448
2016–17	17,879	10,312	8,941	4,232	3,484	1,205	803	1,059	47,915
2017–18	17,387	7,954	9,107	4,448	3,695	1,272	826	1,067	45,756

(a) New South Wales care and protection orders data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders.

(b) New South Wales out-of-home care data at 30 June 2015 onwards are not comparable with data from previous years. New South Wales Safe Home for Life legislative reforms, effective 29 October 2014, transitioned eligible children/young people to the independent care of their guardian. These children/young people exited, and were no longer counted in out-of-home care.

(c) For 2017–18, Victoria out-of-home care counts exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

(d) Data produced from the CP NMDS based on nationally agreed specifications might not match Queensland figures published elsewhere. Queensland data for 2014–15 are based on the CP NMDS, and onward are not comparable with data for previous years.

(e) Western Australia out-of-home care data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders, and, from 2015–16, include children placed in boarding schools.

(f) South Australia could provide the number of children in out-of-home care only where the department is making a financial contribution to the care of a child (this excludes cases where financial payment was offered and declined).

(g) Data for Tasmania may not be comparable year to year due to issues with the recording of order status.

(h) Tasmania is not able to include children in care where a financial payment was offered but was declined by the carer meaning Tasmania's data are slightly lower than would be the case if the counting rule was strictly applied. Tasmanian data also exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

- (i) 'Children receiving child protection services' and 'out-of-home care' data for the Australian Capital Territory include some young people aged 18 and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to support the completion of schooling without change to the placement.
- (j) Children receiving child protection services, and children in substantiations were measured in financial years (2013–14, 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18). These data include unborn children and children of unknown age.
- (k) New South Wales substantiation data are unavailable for 2017–18. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting. For comparison, substantiation rates for all years have been recalculated excluding New South Wales. As a result, substantiation rates should not be compared with previous *Child protection Australia* reports.
- (l) Children on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care were measured as at 30 June each year. These data include children of unknown age.

Note: Some data might not match those published in previous *Child protection Australia* reports, due to retrospective updates to data.

Sources: AIHW Child Protection Collections 2013–14 to 2017–18; Tables S62 and S64.

Table A2: Children in the child protection system, by states and territories, 2013–14 to 2017–18 (rate)

Year	NSW ^{(a)(b)}	Vic ^(c)	Qld ^(d)	WA ^(e)	SA ^(f)	Tas ^{(g)(h)}	ACT ⁽ⁱ⁾	NT	Total
Number per 1,000									
Children receiving child protection services^(j)									
2013–14	31.7	22.9	26.6	26.5	19.8	22.7	19.3	71.3	27.2
2014–15	35.0	26.0	24.2	27.0	17.6	22.4	19.8	91.5	28.6
2015–16	37.6	28.6	24.6	25.8	17.2	22.7	27.3	96.1	30.2
2016–17	38.5	29.6	25.0	25.9	16.9	23.1	22.2	104.1	30.8
2017–18	29.8	31.1	25.5	25.1	17.9	21.7	24.3	117.8	28.7
Children who were the subject of substantiations^{(j)(k)}									
2013–14	9.0	9.0	6.0	5.2	6.1	6.2	4.0	21.9	7.2
2014–15	8.9	10.4	5.2	5.7	5.3	7.3	4.5	27.6	7.6
2015–16	10.1	10.8	5.0	7.1	4.6	7.0	5.1	24.8	7.8
2016–17	10.9	11.3	5.0	7.8	4.2	6.7	3.5	30.5	8.1
2017–18	n.a.	12.4	5.1	7.6	4.5	6.3	3.0	27.8	8.5
Children on care and protection orders^(l)									
2013–14	10.2	7.2	8.2	7.6	7.8	10.4	8.3	15.5	8.7
2014–15	10.9	7.8	8.2	8.1	8.4	10.4	8.6	16.9	9.1
2015–16	11.6	8.2	8.4	8.3	9.6	11.0	9.3	17.1	9.6
2016–17	11.8	8.9	8.4	8.7	10.1	11.7	9.7	17.7	9.9
2017–18	11.5	9.5	8.5	9.3	10.6	12.3	9.6	17.9	10.1
Children in out-of-home care^(l)									
2013–14	10.8	6.0	7.3	6.3	7.3	9.2	7.1	14.3	8.1
2014–15	9.9	6.6	7.5	6.7	7.9	9.3	7.7	16.0	8.1
2015–16	10.4	7.3	7.6	6.9	9.0	10.1	8.4	16.2	8.6
2016–17	10.3	7.5	7.8	7.1	9.5	10.7	8.8	16.8	8.7
2017–18	9.8	5.7	7.8	7.4	10.1	11.3	8.8	17.0	8.2

(a) New South Wales care and protection orders data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders.

(b) New South Wales out-of-home care data at 30 June 2015 onwards are not comparable with data from previous years. New South Wales Safe Home for Life legislative reforms, effective 29 October 2014, transitioned eligible children/young people to the independent care of their guardian. These children/young people exited, and were no longer counted in out-of-home care.

(c) For 2017–18, Victoria out-of-home care counts exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

(d) Data produced from the CP NMDS based on nationally agreed specifications might not match Queensland figures published elsewhere. Queensland data for 2014–15 onward are based on the CP NMDS, and are not comparable with data for previous years.

(e) Western Australia out-of-home care data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders, and, from 2015–16, include children placed in boarding schools.

(f) South Australia could provide the number of children in out-of-home care only where the department is making a financial contribution to the care of a child (this excludes cases where financial payment was offered and declined).

(g) Data for Tasmania may not be comparable year to year due to issues with the recording of order status.

(h) Tasmania is not able to include children in care where a financial payment was offered but was declined by the carer meaning Tasmania's data are slightly lower than would be the case if the counting rule was strictly applied. Tasmanian data also exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(i) 'Children receiving child protection services' and 'out-of-home care' data for the Australian Capital Territory include some young people aged 18 and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to support the completion of schooling without change to the placement.

(j) Children receiving child protection services, and children in substantiations were measured in financial years (2013–14, 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18). These data include unborn children and children of unknown age.

(k) New South Wales substantiation data are unavailable for 2017–18. New South Wales is working to improve the quality and completeness of data for future reporting. For comparison, substantiation rates for all years have been recalculated excluding New South Wales. As a result, substantiation rates should not be compared with previous *Child protection Australia* reports.

- (l) Children on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care were measured as at 30 June each year. These data include children of unknown age.

Notes

1. Some data might not match those published in previous *Child protection Australia* reports, due to retrospective updates to data.
2. Rates were calculated using population data shown in tables S62 and S64. For 2012–13 to 2015–16, population data used to calculate rates are based on the 2011 Census, and from 2016–17 onwards, data are based on the 2016 Census.

Sources: AIHW Child Protection Collections 2013–14 to 2017–18; Tables S62 and S64.

Appendix B: Technical notes

Population data

2017–18 data

In 2017, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released preliminary estimated resident population based on the 2016 Census of Population and Housing. Estimates of the resident population for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children from 2016 were not available at the time of publication. As a result, Indigenous population projections based on the 2011 Census (ABS 2014c) were used for Indigenous children populations.

For 2017–18 the following population data were used:

- 'All children' populations as at 31 December 2017 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2017 (ABS 2018a)
- 'All children' populations as at 30 June 2018 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2018 (ABS 2018b)
- 'Indigenous children' from 2011 Census-based Indigenous population projections (ABS 2014a)
- 'Non-Indigenous' populations derived by subtracting the Indigenous projection count (ABS 2014c) from the respective 'All children' population (ABS 2018a, 2018b).

Trend data

For trend data, the following population data were used:

- 'All children' populations as at 31 December 2013 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2013 (ABS 2014a)
- 'All children' populations as at 30 June 2014 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2014 (ABS 2014b)
- 'All children' populations as at 31 December 2014 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2014 (ABS 2015a)
- 'All children' populations as at 30 June 2015 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2015 (ABS 2015b)
- 'All children' populations as at 31 December 2015 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2015 (ABS 2016a)
- 'All children' populations as at 30 June 2016 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2016 (ABS 2016b)
- 'All children' populations as at 31 December 2016 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2016 (ABS 2017a)
- 'All children' populations as at 30 June 2017 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2017 (ABS 2017b).

Population estimates used in the calculation of historical rates are available in online supplementary tables S62–S65.

To maintain consistency in the trend rates reported in *Child protection Australia*, data are based on the preliminary release, and are not retrospectively updated with each new release.

Calculation of rates

Rates for 'All children'

The rates for 'All children' on care and protection orders and 'All children' in out-of-home care were calculated using the ABS most recent population estimates for 30 June 2018 (ABS 2018b).

The rates of 'All children' who were the subjects of child protection substantiations during 2017–18 were calculated using the ABS population estimates for 31 December 2017 (ABS 2018a).

Rates of children on care and protection orders were calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of children aged 0–17 on care and protection orders at 30 June 2018}}{\text{ABS estimated population of children aged 0–17 at 30 June 2018}} \times 1,000$$

Rates of children in out-of-home care were calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018}}{\text{ABS estimated population of children aged 0–17 at 30 June 2018}} \times 1,000$$

Rates of children who were the subjects of child protection substantiations were calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of children aged 0–17 who were the subjects of substantiations in 2017–18}}{\text{ABS estimated population aged 0–17 at 31 December 2017}} \times 1,000$$

Legislation and practices differ across states and territories for children aged 17. In some jurisdictions, children aged 17 are not substantiated, so their number per 1,000 children who were the subjects of substantiations might be lower.

Where substantiation rates are calculated for the 'less than 1' and '0–17' age groups, unborn children are excluded; these children are included in the calculation of substantiation rates for 'All children'. As population estimates do not include unborn children, the 'All children' rate might represent a slight overestimate.

Rates for 'Indigenous children' and 'non-Indigenous children'

The same basic method outlined for rates for 'All children' was used to calculate the rates for 'Indigenous children' and 'non-Indigenous children', but different methods were used to determine the denominators.

Rates for 'Indigenous children' on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care were calculated using the Indigenous population estimates for 30 June 2018 (ABS 2014c).

The rate of 'Indigenous children' who were the subjects of child protection substantiations during 2017–18 was calculated using the average of the 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2018 Indigenous population projections (ABS 2014c), as a proxy for 31 December 2017.

Non-Indigenous population estimates were derived by subtracting the Indigenous population projections from the 'All children' population estimates.

Rates for states and territories with small numbers of children in their child protection data and small Indigenous populations (notably the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania) should be interpreted carefully. Small changes in the numbers of Indigenous children in the child protection systems, or in population estimates, can have a large impact on rates.

Rate ratio

Rates can be compared using a rate ratio, which is 1 rate divided by another. Rate ratios should be interpreted with care where there are small denominators or where a large proportion of data is recorded as 'unknown'.

In *Child protection Australia* reporting, rate ratios are mainly used to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates, and measure the level of Indigenous over-representation. Rates are also presented to guide interpretation.

Rate ratios are not calculated where 1 or both of the rates have fewer than 5 children or young people in the numerator.

Age

Age is always calculated in whole years. For example, a child who was aged 5 years and 9 months is recorded as being aged 5.

Throughout *Child protection Australia 2017–18*, the AIHW has calculated age at different points in time for a child, depending on the analysis in question:

- For 30 June analyses, age was calculated as at 30 June 2018.
- For analyses of events occurring during the year, age was calculated at the relevant point in time during 2017–18:
 - For analyses of children who were the subject of a child protection notification or substantiation, age was calculated at the earliest date of notification during the period.
 - For analyses of children who were admitted to, or discharged from, a care and protection order or an out-of-home care placement, age was calculated at the date of first admission and first discharge during the period.
- For analyses of children receiving child protection services, age was calculated at the earliest point of contact during 2017–18 or at 1 July 2017 if the child was on an ongoing care and protection order, or in an ongoing out-of-home care placement at the beginning of the period.

Average and median

Two measures of 'central tendency' (the central value or typical value for a probability distribution) are reported in *Child protection Australia 2017–18*:

- **Average (mean)** is calculated by summing all the values, and dividing by the number of observations. In *Child protection Australia*, averages are used in the reporting of the average co-occurrence of abuse and neglect.
- **Median** is the middle value of a set of observations, when arranged in order of value. Medians are often reported where data are not normally distributed, or include extreme values that would distort the average. In *Child protection Australia*, median age is reported for several aspects of the child protection system, including children receiving child protection services, and children admitted to, and discharged from, out-of-home care.

Identification of Indigenous status

Children

The practices used to identify and record the Indigenous status of children vary across states and territories, with some jurisdictions, particularly Tasmania in 2017–18, recording large numbers of people with ‘unknown’ Indigenous status. No state or territory can validate the data on Indigenous children by other means, so the quality of the data is unknown.

In this collection, children are counted as Indigenous if they are identified as such in the state and territory data collections. Children whose Indigenous status is recorded as ‘unknown’ are excluded, where possible, from calculations of rates and proportions. So, the counts for Indigenous children are likely to be an underestimate of the number of Indigenous children in the child protection system.

Caregivers

In the out-of-home care data collection, the Indigenous status of caregivers was collected, as well as the Indigenous status of children in out-of-home care. Carers who are identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are included in the Indigenous category. Where the Indigenous children were living in facility-based care specifically for Indigenous children, the caregiver was counted as Indigenous. Where children were living in other types of facility-based care, the caregiver was not counted as Indigenous.

Points of analysis

During the year

Counts of people during the year are calculated by counting each distinct person subject to the event of interest during the financial year. Each person is counted only once, even if that person had multiple occurrences of the event during the year.

For example, when calculating the number of children and young people who were the subjects of substantiations of child protection notifications during the year, a child or young person will be counted if a notification received during the financial year was substantiated. But that child will only contribute a count of 1, regardless of how many notifications were substantiated for them in the financial year.

30 June (at the end of the financial year)

Counts of people at 30 June are calculated by counting each distinct person for whom the event of interest was ongoing at the end of the financial year. Each person is counted only once, even if that person had multiple occurrences of the event ongoing at 30 June.

In instances where a child or young person has multiple child protection orders ongoing at 30 June, the child or young person is counted against the national order type that represented the highest level of intervention.

In instances where a child or young person has multiple living arrangements ongoing at 30 June, the child or young person is counted against the living arrangement type that is considered their usual placement.

For example, when calculating the number of children and young people on a care and protection order at 30 June, a child or young person will be counted if they were on a care and protection order during the reporting period, and the order had not ended, or ended after 30 June. If the child or young person had an ongoing finalised guardianship order and an ongoing interim order at 30 June, they would be counted in the finalised guardianship order category, as this represents the higher level of intervention of the 2 orders.

Trends

Trends are reported over the 5-year period from 2013–14 to 2017–18. Increases over time in the number or rate of children receiving child protection services or support might relate to changes in the underlying rate of child abuse and neglect, increases in notifications and access to services, or a combination of these factors.

It is standard practice to present 5-year trends in data, as changes in state and territory legislation, policy/practice, and information management systems reduce the ability to accurately compare data over longer periods.

Changes that have an impact on the data are provided as caveats to the data, and in Appendixes C–E (online) at www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/related-material.

Socioeconomic area

Child protection Australia reporting uses the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), developed by the ABS to analyse socioeconomic status (ABS 2016d).

The SEIFA comprises 4 indexes that are created using information from the 5-yearly Census of Population and Housing. These indexes are:

- the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage
- the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage
- the Index of Economic Resources
- the Index of Education and Occupation.

The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage is used to compare the average level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage. It is the SEIFA index used in this report, ranking geographical areas on a continuum from 'most disadvantaged' to 'least disadvantaged' using a combination of income, education, employment, occupation, housing, and other Census variables (ABS 2016d).

These Census variables relate to both advantage and disadvantage, including low levels of income and education, as well as high levels of education and income.

This index can be used to measure both disadvantage and advantage. A high score indicates a relatively high level of advantage, and a relatively low level of disadvantage. An area containing some relatively disadvantaged people and some relatively advantaged people might have a low score on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, due to the levels of disadvantage, but a relatively high score on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage, by having both advantage and disadvantage. Population-based fifths are used.

The socioeconomic area in which people live is measured by allocating the relevant SEIFA population-based (2016 population) fifth to postcode information available for the child or

young person. Invalid, missing, or unknown postcodes of last known home address were excluded from the analysis. In 2017–18, 763 records were excluded from analysis.

Some postcode areas were split between 2 or more areas with different SEIFA scores. Where this was the case, the data were weighted according to the proportion of the population of the postcode area in each SEIFA area.

The SEIFA represents the average of all people living in the area, rather than individuals living in the area. As a result, socioeconomic analyses in *Child protection Australia* reporting indicate the level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage in the area corresponding to the postcode information available for the child or young person, not the level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage of the child or young person or their family.

If inferences are made about individuals in an area based purely on SEIFA (the characteristics of the area in which they live), they could be misleading. This brings the potential for error in any conclusions (referred to as the ecological fallacy).

Area-level and individual-level socioeconomic disadvantage are interrelated but distinct concepts, so they are measured differently. Using its Socio-Economic Index for Individuals, the ABS found that the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory have the greatest proportions of highly socioeconomically diverse neighbourhoods, and, as an aggregate measure, SEIFA captures only a fraction of the true level of disadvantage being experienced in these jurisdictions. SEIFA information used at a suburb or postcode level can have the effect of minimising the actual levels of disadvantage in some areas (ABS 2011).

Remoteness area

Child protection Australia reports use the Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness Structure developed by the ABS to analyse the remoteness of a child's usual place of residence at the time of notification, and the remoteness of a child's living arrangement (ABS 2016c).

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness Structure comprises of broad geographical regions—remoteness areas, which share common remoteness characteristics. This report uses remoteness areas that divide Australia into 5 categories—*Major cities*, *Inner regional*, *Outer regional*, *Remote*, and *Very remote* Australia (ABS 2016c).

Remoteness areas are based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, developed by the University of Adelaide. This index is based on road distances to services centres and is used in conjunction with the ABS's Statistical Area Level 1 to determine the remoteness of a particular region in Australia (ABS 2016c).

The AIHW uses postcodes to match remoteness information to child protection data. These data include postcode at notification and postcode of living arrangement. Records with invalid, missing, or unknown postcodes at notification or of living arrangements were excluded from the analysis (792 records in 2017–18). New South Wales was also excluded from the analyses of remoteness at notification, as data were not available. A small number of postcodes were split between 2 or more remoteness areas. For these instances, the data were weighted according to the proportion of the population of the postcode area in each remoteness area. Some children and young people might appear in remoteness areas for which there is no population within that state or territory. This is due to records whose postcode is in a different state or territory to the one in which they received a notification, or were in out-of-home care.

Acknowledgments

Andrew Nguyen, Kristy Raithel, and Teaghan Small authored this report. David Braddock, Louise York, and members of the Child Welfare Unit provided valuable input and feedback.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare would also like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the technical experts from each jurisdiction. Thanks are extended to the state and territory departments that provided data for this report:

- Department of Family and Community Services, New South Wales
- Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Queensland
- Department of Communities, Western Australia
- Department for Child Protection, South Australia
- Department of Communities Tasmania
- Community Services Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- Territory Families, Northern Territory.

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CP NMDS	Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
Tas	Tasmania
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

Symbols

0	zero
..	not applicable
n.a.	not available
n.p.	not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data

Glossary

Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia: A classification of the level of accessibility to goods and services (such as general practitioners, hospitals, and specialist care) based on the proximity to these services (measured by road distance).

administrative arrangement: An agreement with a child protection department, which has the same effect as a court order of transferring custody or guardianship. This arrangement can also allow a child to be placed in out-of-home care without going through the courts.

adoption: A legal process involving the transfer of the rights and responsibilities for the permanent care of a child from the child's parent(s) to their adoptive parent(s). The legal relationship between the child and the parent(s) is severed, and any legal rights that existed from birth regarding the birth parent(s)—such as inheritance—are removed. For the adoptive parents, the legal rights of the adopted child become the same as they would be if the child had been born to the adoptive parent(s).

age: The age of a person in completed years, 'unborn' for those in utero, or 'less than 1' where age is between live birth and under 1 year.

The tables containing information for notifications, investigations, and substantiations show age at the time of notification.

The tables containing information on children on orders by type of living arrangements, and children in out-of-home care at 30 June show age at 30 June 2018.

Tables containing information on admissions or discharges show age at the time of first admission or discharge.

For intensive family support services, age is shown as at the commencement of the service.

agency: A body funded by state and territory departments responsible for child protection to provide services.

anonymous: Of unknown name.

aunt/uncle: A carer who is the biological/step/adoptive aunt or uncle of the child placed in their care. This includes Indigenous kinship placements with aunts/uncles. Relatives beyond first aunt/uncle are excluded.

Australian Standard Geographical Classification: Common framework defined by the ABS to collect and disseminate geographically classified statistics. This classification was implemented in 1984, and the final release was in 2011. It has been replaced by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).

Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Common framework defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for collection and dissemination of geographically classified statistics. The ASGS Australian Statistical Geography Standard replaced the Australian Standard Geographical Classification in July 2011.

care and protection order: A legal order or arrangement that gives child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare. See also **finalised guardianship or custody order**, **finalised third-party parental responsibility order**, **finalised supervisory order**, **interim and temporary order**, and **administrative arrangement**.

child: A young person aged 0–17.

child care personnel: People engaged in providing occasional, part-time or full-time day care for children.

child concern report: Report to a community services department about concerns for a child, where there is no indication that a child might have been, or is at risk of being, harmed through abuse or neglect. This might include concerns about a child's welfare related to the quality of their home environment, or the standard of care that they are receiving.

child protection and support services: The departments in each state and territory that are responsible for child protection matters.

children receiving child protection services: Children who are the subjects of an investigation of a notification, on a care and protection order, and/or in out-of-home care.

children subject to orders: Children aged 0–17 on a care and protection order or other formal arrangement, or children aged 18 or under who were discharged from those care and protection orders/arrangements. See also **care and protection order**.

custody order: See **finalised guardianship or custody order**.

dealt with by other means: A notification responded to by means other than an investigation, such as by providing advice or referring to services. Notifications dealt with by other means are divided into 2 categories: **notification in process** and **notification resolved without investigation**.

departmental officer: Any person employed by a state or territory department responsible for child protection who is not classified under any other 'source of notification' category.

disability: An umbrella term for any or all of: an impairment of body structure or function, a limitation in activities, or a restriction in participation. Disability is a multidimensional concept, and is considered as an interaction between health conditions and the environment.

emotional abuse: Any act by a person having the care of a child that results in the child suffering any kind of significant emotional deprivation or trauma. Children affected by exposure to family violence are also included in this category.

family: Includes **parent/guardian**, **sibling**, and **other relative/kin**.

family care: A type of care where the child is living with parents (natural or adoptive) or other relatives/kin (other than parents) who are not reimbursed. See also **relatives/kin who are not reimbursed**.

family group home: A home for children provided by a department or community-sector agency that has live-in, non-salaried carers who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for providing care.

finalised guardianship or custody order: Order involving the transfer of legal guardianship to the relevant state or territory department or non-government agency. This order involves considerable intervention in the child's life and that of their family, and is sought only as a last resort.

A guardianship order conveys responsibility for the welfare of the child to the guardian (for example, for the child's education, health, religion, accommodation, and financial matters). It does not necessarily grant the right to the daily care and control of the child, or the right to make decisions about the daily care and control of the child, which are granted under custody orders.

A custody order is generally an order that places a child in the custody of either the state or territory department responsible for child protection, or a non-government agency. It usually involves the child protection department being responsible for the daily care and requirements

of the child, while the parent retains legal guardianship. Custody alone does not bestow any responsibility for the long-term welfare of the child.

Finalised guardianship or custody orders can be a **long-term order** or a **short-term order**.

finalised investigation: A notification received between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018 that was investigated, with the investigation completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2018. The cut-off point of 31 August is applied to allow time for investigating notifications made close to the end of the previous financial year. The 'outcomes of finalised investigations' are classified into 2 categories: **substantiated** and **not substantiated**.

finalised supervisory order: An order giving the department responsible for child protection some responsibility for a child's welfare. Under this order, the department supervises and/or directs the level and type of care that is to be provided to the child.

A child under a supervisory order is generally under the responsibility of his or her parents, and the guardianship or custody of the child is unaffected. This means finalised supervisory orders are less interventionist than finalised guardianship or custody orders, but require the child's parent or guardian to meet specified conditions, such as medical care of the child.

finalised third-party parental responsibility order: 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.

Finalised third-party parental responsibility orders can be a **long-term order** or a **short-term order**.

formal shared care: Where a case plan exists for children to live in family care, and to have regular planned periods in out-of-home care.

foster care: A form of out-of-home care where the caregiver is authorised and reimbursed (or was offered but declined reimbursement) by the state/territory for the care of the child. (This category excludes relatives/kin who are reimbursed.) Degrees of reimbursement made to foster carers vary.

foster carer household: A private household containing 1 or more foster carers:

- who have undergone the relevant screening/selection and approval process
- who have received authorisation from the relevant department or agency to enable a child to be placed in their care
- for whom reimbursement is available from the state or territory government for expenses incurred in caring for the child (degrees of reimbursement made to foster carers vary)
- who are part of an ongoing review process.

friend/neighbour: An unrelated person or acquaintance who is known to, or lives in close proximity to, the child or their family, or to the person believed to be responsible for the abuse or neglect.

grandparent: A carer who is the biological/step/adoptive grandparent of the child placed in their care. This includes Indigenous kinship placements with grandparents.

guardianship order: See **finalised guardianship or custody order**.

home-based out-of-home care: Care provided for a child who is placed in the home of a carer, who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) for the cost of care of that child. There are 4 categories of home-based out-of-home care: **relatives/kin who are reimbursed, foster care, third-party parental care, and other home-based out-of-home care.**

hospital/health centre personnel: Any person not elsewhere classified who is employed at a public or private hospital or other health centre or clinic.

households commencing care: Includes all carer households that, during the year ended 30 June, received authorisation from the relevant department or agency to enable a child to be placed in their care, regardless of whether a child was placed in their care in that period.

This includes households that received provisional authorisation (which might be to facilitate a placement) while formal approval/registration was being finalised. These households are included only once, at the time of provisional authorisation (and not again when full authorisation is received). Households commencing care for the first time are included. Households whose existing authorisation has been renewed as part of a standard ongoing review process are excluded. Households receiving authorisation to provide respite care only (and not also authorisation to provide general foster or relative/kinship care) are excluded.

households exiting care: Includes any carer household that, at some point during the year ended 30 June, were no longer authorised by the relevant department or agency to have a child placed in their care. For example, the carer household might have voluntarily withdrawn/deregistered, or the relevant department or agency might have formally revoked their authorisation. Households changing from provisional authorisation to full authorisation are excluded.

immigration (Guardianship of Children) orders: Orders made under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*. Under this Act, the Minister for Immigration is the legal guardian for unaccompanied humanitarian minors (children under 18 who have entered Australia without a relative to care for them). But the minister may assign custody of the child to a willing and suitable person in the jurisdiction where a child lives. The assigned person becomes responsible for all matters concerning the child's daily activities, care, and welfare. This category captures the arrangements of children who are subsequently placed with carers funded by the departments responsible for child protection.

independent living: Accommodation where the child lives independently, such as private board or being the lead tenant in a household.

Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD): One of the indexes in the set of **Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas** used to rank the average socioeconomic conditions of the population in an area. It is a ranking of the relative advantage or disadvantage of an area that uses a combination of Census advantage and disadvantage variables, including income, education, employment, occupation, and housing.

Indigenous: Children of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island descent who identify, and are identified as, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Indigenous status: The status of a person who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and is accepted as such by the community in which they live. See also **Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and unknown Indigenous status.**

infant: Child under 1 year of age.

intensive family support services: Services that aim to prevent imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers because of child protection concerns, and to reunify families where separation has already occurred.

interim and temporary order: An order covering the provision of a limited period of supervision and/or placement of a child. Parental responsibility under this order may be with the parents or with the department responsible for child protection. 'Unfinalised orders' (such as applications to the court for care and protection orders) are also included in this category, unless another finalised order is in place. In some jurisdictions, interim and temporary orders are put into place while a finalised order is sought.

investigation: The process whereby the relevant department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification received between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018. Departmental staff assess the harm, or degree of harm, to the child, and their protective needs. An investigation includes sighting or interviewing the child where it is practical to do so. See also **investigation in process**, **investigation closed—no outcome possible**, and **finalised investigation**.

investigation closed—no outcome possible: An investigation begun for a notification made between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018 that was not able to be finalised to reach the outcome of 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated', and for which files were closed for administrative purposes. This might happen, for example, in cases where the family has relocated. For this report, these investigations were completed between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018.

investigation in process: An investigation that begun for a notification received between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, but was not completed nor an outcome recorded by 31 August 2018.

known carer adoption: Adoption by the foster parent(s) or other non-relative(s) who has been caring for a child in out-of-home care, and has had the responsibility for making decisions about the daily care and control of the child for the relevant period (as specified by the relevant state/territory department) before the adoption.

living arrangement: The type of care in which a child on an order was living. See also **residential care**, **foster care**, **family group home**, **home-based out-of-home care**, and **family care**.

living situation: The type of care in which the child or children in the family lived at the time of case commencement for intensive family support services. See also **family care**, **out-of-home care**, **formal shared care**, and **other living arrangement**.

location: The site at which the intensive family support service workers are based. If an agency has more than 1 location, each location must be counted.

long-term care: Children who had been continuously in out-of-home care for 2 years or more.

long-term guardianship carers: A carer who has a child placed with them under an order where parental responsibility is transferred to them. See also **finalised third-party parental responsibility order**.

long-term order: Transfers guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period greater than 2 years, generally until the child reaches the age of 18.

medical/health personnel: Includes **medical practitioner**, **hospital/health centre personnel**, and **other health personnel**.

medical practitioner: Registered medical practitioner, including both general practitioners and specialists in hospitals or in the community.

neglect: Any serious act or omission by a person having the care of a child that, within the bounds of cultural tradition, constitutes a failure to provide conditions that are essential for the healthy physical and emotional development of a child.

non-familial relationship: A carer who has a pre-existing relationship with the child in their care, but is not a biological/step/adoptive relative (for example, neighbours, family friends and so forth). This includes Indigenous kinship placements with carers who have a non-familial relationship to the child.

non-government organisation: Any non-government organisation that provides services to the community on a not-for-profit basis, and is not classified under any other **source of notification** category.

non-Indigenous: Children who have not been identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent; this excludes children of unknown Indigenous status.

notification: Contact made to an authorised department by people or other bodies alleging child abuse or neglect, child maltreatment, or harm to a child.

notification in process: A notification where the decision to investigate has not been reached.

notification resolved without investigation: A notification responded to by means other than an investigation, such as by providing advice or referring to services.

not stated: Information that was unknown or not recorded.

not substantiated: A notification received between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018 where an investigation concluded that there was no reasonable cause to suspect prior, current, or future abuse, neglect, or harm to the child.

other health personnel: A person who provides supplementary, paramedical, and/or ancillary medical services. This includes nurses, infant welfare sisters, dentists, radiographers, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and so on. It does not include social workers and non-medical hospital/health centre personnel.

other home-based out-of-home care: A care type where the child was in home-based out-of-home care, other than with relatives/kin who are reimbursed or in foster care.

other Indigenous kinship relationship: Carers who are members of Indigenous communities, who are accepted by that community as being related to the child. Excludes Indigenous kinship placements with grandparents, aunts/uncles, siblings, other relatives, and carers with a non-familial relationship to the child.

other living arrangement: Living arrangement not otherwise classified, including unknown living arrangement. For children on orders, this includes any placements made in disability services, psychiatric services, juvenile justice facilities, specialist homelessness services, and overnight child care services, boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels, and the defence forces. These living arrangements may have rostered and/or paid staff, and are generally not a home-like environment.

other out-of-home care: Out-of-home care placements that are not otherwise categorised, including unknown placement types. This includes boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels, and the defence forces.

other relatives/kin: Relative(s) of the child (other than parents), including grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins. The relationship can be full, half, or 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 their birth. This category also includes members of Indigenous communities who are accepted by that community as being related to the child.

other source of notification: All other persons or organisations not classified by any other source of notification category (for example, ministers of religion or government agencies and instrumentalities not elsewhere classified), as well as people who make notifications anonymously.

out-of-home care: Overnight care for children aged 0–17, where the state makes a financial payment, or where a financial payment has been offered, but has been declined by the carer. See also **residential care**, **family group home**, **foster care**, **relative/kinship care**, **independent living**, and **other out-of-home care**.

parent/guardian: A natural or substitute parent, spouse of a natural parent, adoptive parent, or spouse of an adoptive parent, or any other person who has an ongoing legal responsibility for the care and protection of a child.

permanency planning: The processes used by state and territory departments responsible for child protection to achieve a stable long-term care arrangement (which can be broadly grouped as reunification, third-party parental responsibility orders, long-term finalised guardianship/custody/care, and adoption).

permanent care order: See **finalised third-party parental responsibility order**.

physical abuse: Any non-accidental physical act inflicted upon a child by a person having the care of a child.

police: Any member of a Commonwealth, state or territory law enforcement agency.

prevention services: Services specifically aimed at assisting families to prevent imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers for child protection reasons.

provisionally approved carer household: Households that have received provisional authorisation (which might be to facilitate a placement of a child), while formal approval/registration is being finalised. This category is only used for jurisdictions where the type of the provisional authorisation is not recorded until the approval/registration process is finalised.

relative/kinship care: A form of out-of-home care where the caregiver is:

- a relative (other than parents)
- considered to be family or a close friend
- a member of the child or young person's community (in accordance with their culture)
- reimbursed by the state/territory for the care of the child (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement).

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, a kinship carer may be another Indigenous person who is a member of their community, a compatible community, or from the same language group.

relative/kinship carer household: A private household containing 1 or more relative/kinship carers:

- who have undergone the relevant screening/selection and approval process
- who have received authorisation from the relevant department or agency to enable a relative/kinship child to be placed in their care
- for whom reimbursement is available from a government authority or non-government organisation for expenses incurred in caring for the child (degrees of reimbursement made to relative/kinship carers vary)
- who are part of an ongoing review process.

relatives/kin who are not reimbursed: Relatives/kin (other than parents) who are not reimbursed by the state/territory for the care of the child.

relatives/kin who are reimbursed: Where the caregiver is:

- a relative (other than parents)
- considered to be family or a close friend
- a member of the child or young person's community (in accordance with their culture)
- reimbursed by the state/territory for the care of the child (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement).

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, a kinship carer may be another Indigenous person who is a member of their community, a compatible community, or from the same language group.

remoteness classification: Each state and territory is divided into several regions, based on their relative accessibility to goods and services (such as general practitioners, hospitals, and specialist care) as measured by road distance. These regions are based on the **Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia** and defined as remoteness areas by either the **Australian Standard Geographical Classification** (before 2011) or the **Australian Statistical Geographical Standard** (from 2011 onwards) in each Census year.

residential care: A type of 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: A form of out-of-home care used to provide short-term accommodation for children and young people where the intention is for the child to return to their prior place of residence. Respite placements include:

- respite from birth family, where a child is placed in out-of-home care temporarily for reasons other than child protection (for example, the child's parents are ill or unable to care for them temporarily, as a family support mechanism to prevent entry into full-time care, as part of the reunification process, or as a shared care arrangement)
- respite from placement, where a child spends regular, short and agreed periods of time with a carer other than their primary carer.

reunification services: Services that seek to reunify families where separation of children from their primary caregivers has already occurred for child protection reasons.

school personnel: Any appropriately trained person involved in instructing, or imparting knowledge to, children or in providing direct support for this education. This includes teachers, teachers' aides, school principals, and counsellors who work in preschool, kindergarten, primary, secondary, technical, sporting, or art-and-crafts education.

sexual abuse: Any act by a person having the care of a child that exposes the child to, or involves the child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding, or contrary to accepted community standards.

short-term order: An order that transfers guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period of 2 years or less.

sibling: A brother or half-brother, sister or half-sister, whether natural (that is, biological), adopted or foster. Sibling relative/kinship carers are those who are the biological/step/adoptive sibling of the child placed in their care. This includes Indigenous kinship placements with siblings.

social worker: Any person engaged in providing social or welfare service in the community.

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas: A set of indexes, created from Census data that aim to represent the areas of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage in Australian communities. The index value reflects the overall or average level of disadvantage of the population of an area; it does not show how individuals living in the same area differ from each other. This report uses the **Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage**.

source of notification: The person or organisation that initially made a child protection notification to the relevant authority. The source is classified according to the relationship to the child allegedly abused, neglected, or harmed. The source of notification is reported under 12 categories: **subject child, family, friend/neighbour, medical/health personnel, social worker, school personnel, child care personnel, police, departmental officer, non-government organisation personnel, other source of notification, and not stated**.

subject child: Any person who notifies the department regarding a concern about themselves.

substantiation of notification: Child protection notification made to relevant authorities during the current year (for example, 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018) that was investigated (with the investigation finalised by 31 August), and where it was concluded that there was reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected, or otherwise harmed. Substantiation does not necessarily require sufficient evidence for a successful prosecution, and does not imply that treatment or case management was provided. Substantiations may also include cases where there is no suitable caregiver, such as children who have been abandoned, or whose parents are deceased.

third-party parental care: Placements for children on third-party parental responsibility orders. See **finalised third-party parental responsibility order**, and **long-term guardianship carers**.

third-party parental responsibility order: See **finalised third-party parental responsibility order**.

type of abuse or neglect: One of the 4 types, or categories, of substantiations: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Each category includes findings of actual harm or significant risk of harm. Where more than 1 type of abuse or neglect has occurred, the substantiation is classified to the type likely to be the most severe in the short term, or to place the child most at risk in the short term, or, if such an assessment is not possible, classified to the most obvious form of abuse or neglect. See also **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect**.

type of action for notification: Action taken by the department responsible for child protection in response to a notification. See also **investigation**, and **dealt with by other means**.

type of placement: The type of out-of-home care in which a child was living. See also **residential care, family group home, home-based out-of-home care, independent living,** and **other out-of-home care.**

unknown Indigenous status: Describes children whose Indigenous status was unknown.

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Related publications

This report, *Child protection Australia 2017–18*, is part of an annual series. Supplementary population data tables (those with a prefix of S) are part of the *Child protection Australia 2017–18* release. These tables, as well as earlier editions of the report, can be downloaded for free from www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection-publications/.

The following AIHW publications about children, youth, and families might also be of interest:

- AIHW 2012. A picture of Australia's children 2012. Cat. no. PHE 167. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2013. National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020: technical paper on operational definitions and data issues for key national indicators. Cat. no. CWS 44. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2013. Scoping reportable measures for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020: supporting outcome 1. Cat. no. CWS 45. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014. A new approach to national child protection data: implementation of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set. Child welfare series no. 59. Cat. no. CWS 50. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014. Hospitalised injury in children and young people 2011–12. Injury research and statistics series no. 91. Cat. no. INJCAT 167. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014. Indigenous child safety. Cat. no. IHW 127. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2015. Educational outcomes for children in care: linking 2013 child protection and NAPLAN data. Cat. no. CWS 54. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2015. Developing a linked data collection to report on the relationships between child protection and youth justice supervision. Data linkage series no. 20. Cat. no. CWS 55. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2016. Permanency planning in child protection: a review of current concepts and available data 2016. Child welfare series no. 64. Cat. no. CWS 58. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2016. The views of children and young people in out-of-home care: overview of indicator results from a pilot national survey 2015. Bulletin no. 132. Cat. no. AUS 197. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2016. Vulnerable young people: interactions across homelessness, youth justice and child protection: 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2015. Cat. no. HOU 279. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2017. Adoptions Australia 2016–17. Child welfare series no. 67. Cat. no. CWS 61. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2017. Australia's welfare 2017. Australia's welfare series no. 13. Cat. no. AUS 214. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2017. Children admitted to out-of-home care 2014–15. Bulletin no. 142. Cat. no. AUS 217. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2017. Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision 2015–16. Data linkage series no. 23. Cat. no. CSI 25. Canberra: AIHW.



During 2017–18, 158,612 (28.7 per 1,000) Australian children received child protection services (investigation, care and protection order and/or were in out-of-home care). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 8 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to have received child protection services. Children from geographically remote areas were more likely to be the subject of a substantiation, or be in out-of-home care than those from major cities.

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