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Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare

# Child protection Australia

2018–19

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# Child protection Australia

2018–19



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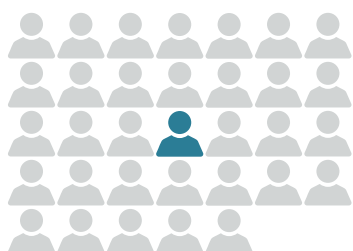
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# Summary

Each year, around 3% of all children aged 0–17 are assisted by Australia’s child protection systems. Some children are unable to live safely at home as they may be at risk of being abused or neglected, or their parents may be unable to provide adequate care. Children and their families may receive support services to keep children with their families, or be subject to investigations of reports of child abuse/neglect, protection orders, and/or placement in out-of-home care, such as with a relative or foster carer.

This report presents statistics on state and territory child protection and family support services, and selected characteristics of children receiving these services. This includes statistics for 2018–19, and trends over the 5-year period from 2014–15 to 2018–19.

## 1 in 33 children aged 0–17 received child protection services in 2018–19



170,200 children received child protection services in 2018–19. More than half (58%) 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.

68% of children receiving child protection services were repeat clients—that is, the children had previously been involved with the child protection system.

## Emotional abuse was the most common type of abuse or neglect



Emotional abuse (54%) was the most common type of abuse or neglect substantiated through investigations in 2018–19. This was followed by neglect (21%), physical abuse (15%), and sexual abuse (10%). A higher proportion of girls (13%) were subject to sexual abuse than boys (6%), while boys had slightly higher percentages of substantiations for neglect and physical abuse.

## Children from remote areas had the highest rates of substantiation



Children from *Very remote* areas had the highest rates of substantiation (20 per 1,000 children) and were 3 times as likely as children from *Major cities* (7 per 1,000 children) to be the subject of a substantiation in 2018–19.

## About 44,900 children were in out-of-home care



At 30 June 2019, of the approximately 44,900 children in out-of-home care, 92% were in home-based care. Most of the children in out-of-home care (95%) were on care and protection orders and 67% had been continuously in out-of-home care for 2 years or more.

## Trends over time for children in out of home care

Trends for children in out-of-home care have been affected by varying definitions over time. A nationally consistent definition for out-of-home care was agreed in 2019, and all jurisdictions now report out-of-home care data according to this national definition. Out-of-home care data in this report should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

Between 30 June 2015 and 30 June 2017, the number of children in out-of-home care rose 10% (from 43,400 to 47,900) before falling 5% to 45,800 in 2018 and then 2% to 44,900 in 2019. The rate of children in out-of-home care followed the same pattern.

The fall between 30 June 2017 and 2019 corresponds with jurisdictions aligning with the national definition of out-of-home care at different times with respect to the exclusion of children on third-party parental responsibility orders. Children on these orders are now consistently regarded as not being in out-of-home care.

If the numbers of children in out-of-home care and children on third party orders are both considered, the number and rates of children not living with parents for child protection reasons has continued to rise since 2015.

### About 30,300 children had been in out-of-home care for 2 years or more



At 30 June 2019, of the approximately 30,300 children in long-term (2 years or more) out-of-home care, 81% were on long-term guardianship orders and in either relative/kinship care (10,800) or foster care (11,900).

Of the children in long-term out-of-home care, 2 in 5 (42%) were Indigenous.

### 13% of children in out-of-home care exited to a permanency outcome in 2018–19



Over 3,700 children were reunified with family during 2018–19, with a further 680 children leaving out-of-home care to third-party parental responsibility orders.

### 1 in 6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children received child protection services



- In 2018–19, 51,500 Indigenous children received child protection services, a rate of 156 per 1,000 Indigenous children—an increase from 134 per 1,000 in 2014–15.
- 12,600 Indigenous children were the subject of a substantiation in 2018–19. The most common type of substantiated abuse was emotional abuse (47%) followed by neglect (31%).
- At 30 June 2019, 21,900 Indigenous children were on care and protection orders. Of these children, 70% (15,300) were on guardianship or custody orders.
- 1 in 18 Indigenous children (around 18,000) were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019, two-thirds (64%) of whom were living with relatives, kin or other Indigenous caregivers.
- Indigenous children continue to be over-represented among children receiving child protection services, including for substantiated child abuse and neglect, children on care and protection orders and children in out-of-home care.
- Based on data from 6 jurisdictions, 84% of Indigenous children who exited out-of-home care to a permanency outcome in 2017–18 did not return to care within 12 months.



# 1 Introduction

Safety, freedom from violence and a stable family environment are fundamental rights of children (UN General Assembly, 1989). Despite this, not all children can live safely at home with their family.

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.

Several government and non-government organisations share a common duty of care towards the protection of children and young people. Government 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, generally delivered by non-government organisations who provide family support services.

Child protection agencies and non-government organisations assist vulnerable children who have been, or are at risk of harm, or whose parents are unable to provide appropriate care or protection. Children and their families come into contact with the child protection system during the investigation and case management of child harm reports. This process may lead to legal intervention to remove a child, or referral to a variety of support services.

The national recurrent spending on child protection and out-of-home care was \$5.5 billion in 2018–19, a real increase of \$505 million (10%) on 2017–18. This continues a pattern of increased spending over the past 5-year period, averaging an annual increase of about \$330 million between 2014–15 and 2018–19 (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2020).

State and territory departments and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) jointly fund the annual collation, analysis and publication of child protection data.

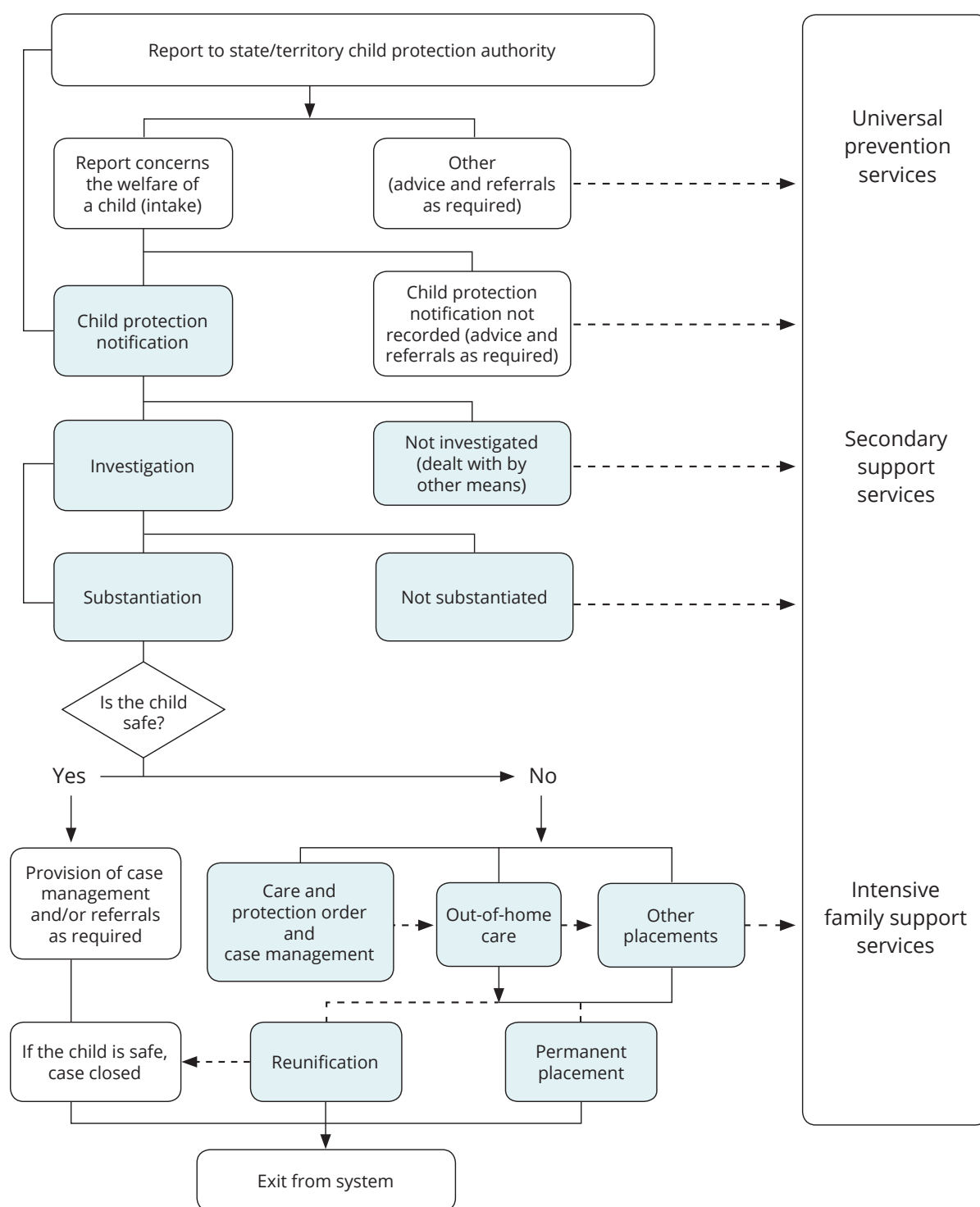
## How does child protection work in Australia?

Across Australia, the main processes of the child protection system are similar. A simplified version of these processes is shown in Figure 1.1, with further explanation in Box 1.1.

Children can come into contact with the child protection system in various ways. Anyone concerned about a child's welfare can report their concern to a responsible department for further action. Reports of concern 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 family concerns such as economic problems or social isolation.

Child concern reports are screened to determine whether the situation meets a threshold for further action. The defined threshold for further action varies across jurisdictions, and this can lead to jurisdictional differences in the responses to initial reports. Reports deemed serious enough to require further action are classified as a 'family support issue' and referred to support services, or as a 'child protection notification' requiring further intervention. The National Child Protection Data Collection does not include 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 key concepts**

### **Notifications, investigations, and substantiations**

Once a child concern report has been classified as a notification, the case is further assessed to determine the next action to be taken. This can include an investigation or referral to support services. In cases where the child is deemed to be safe, no further action is taken.

Investigations are undertaken to gain more information about a child involved in a notification. This may include interviews with the child, their parents and/or other family members, visits to the child's home and collection of information from other sources. An investigation will determine that the notification is either 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated'.

A substantiation indicates that there is reason to believe that the child has been, is being, or is likely to be harmed. In these cases, the child protection department attempts to ensure the safety of the child. This may include implementing a care and protection order, placing a child in out-of-home care, or engaging family support services. Where it is safe to do so, for example, where parents are able to provide safety, or a safety plan has been put in place during an investigation, it may be determined that no further action is needed.

### **Care and protection orders**

In cases where further intervention is necessary, the department may apply to the court for a care and protection order. This is a last resort used for cases where there is risk of serious harm to the child, and all other care options have been exhausted. The level of intervention in the child's life is dependent upon the type of care and protection order issued by the court (see Table 4.1 for further details on care and protection orders).

### **Out-of-home care**

Children are placed in out-of-home care for various reasons. Children who are the subjects of a substantiation of abuse or neglect may be placed into out-of-home care in order to provide them with a safe environment. There are currently no national data available on the reasons children are placed in out-of-home care.

As out-of-home care requires significant intervention in a child's life, it is used as a last resort. The current priority is to keep children safely at home with their families wherever possible. If this is not possible the preferred option is to place the child within their wider family or community. This is particularly emphasised for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in order to maintain their connection to culture and country, as outlined by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (SNAICC, 2018).

Once a child is placed in out-of-home care, efforts are focused on maintaining the stability of their placement (permanency) and/or reuniting the child with their family if appropriate (reunification). Regardless of whether a child remains in out-of-home care on a long-term basis or reunites with their family, the goal is to provide a stable, safe environment for the child to grow up in.

### **Family support services**

Family support services may be used instead of, or in addition to other child protection interventions. These services might include programs to prevent family dysfunction and maltreatment, provide support and advice to families, develop parenting skills, and family reunification services. More intensive programs are offered to assist the most vulnerable families (COAG 2009).

Nationally, the focus of services is increasingly on early intervention and family support services to help prevent families entering or re-entering the child protection system, and to minimise the need for more intrusive interventions (AIFS: Bromfield & Holzer 2008a; DSS 2018). Most jurisdictions have enacted strategies that 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).

Child protection policies and practices are continually being developed by jurisdictions to improve the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children. While the processes are largely similar, there are key differences that should be considered when comparing data across jurisdictions.

Further details about the national policy context and each jurisdiction's policy and practice are described in Appendixes B to G (online) <[www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/related-material](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/related-material)>.

## What data are used in this report?

### National child protection data

Data in this report were largely drawn from the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set (CP NMDS), implemented for reporting from 2012–13. Children are those aged under 18 and for some states and territories, this also includes unborn children.

The CP NMDS consists of several unit record (child-level) files from all states except New South Wales (where aggregate counts are supplied for most tables in this publication). The data were extracted from state and territory child protection administrative data sets according to nationally agreed definitions and technical specifications.

National child protection data are based on cases reported to departments responsible for child protection, so are likely to understate the true prevalence of child abuse and neglect. 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 were 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. As it is possible for children to receive child protection services in multiple jurisdictions, some children may be double-counted where data from multiple jurisdictions are reported.

Throughout the report, table and figure titles refer to 'children' where counts of unique children are used. Where events are the counted unit the specific component of the child protection system is referred to in table and figure titles (for example, notifications or orders issued). See Appendix C (online) for more information on counting methodology.

Rates presented in this report are per 1,000 population of children. That is, population rates are calculated by dividing the number of children for a specific measure or group (for example, children in out-of-home care) by the corresponding population. See Appendix C (online) for more information.

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.

Metadata for the CP NMDS are available on METeOR, the AIHW's online metadata repository, and can be accessed at <<https://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/706929>>.

A data quality statement for the CP NMDS is also available at <<https://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/727110>>.

Box 1.2 summarises data limitations specific to this report.

### **Box 1.2: Data limitations in this report**

A nationally consistent definition for out-of-home care has been implemented for all jurisdictions in 2018–19. The national definition focuses reporting on children for whom there is ongoing case management to achieve a permanent placement or reunification. This has resulted in a decrease in the number and rates of children in out-of-home care and a small increase in the number of children discharged from out-of-home care. See 'Chapter 5 Out-of-home care' for further information.

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

There are also differences in jurisdictional policy and practice which can influence other reported data. See Appendixes B to G (online) for further information. The differences can affect comparability of data across jurisdictions for some measures, as noted in figure and table footnotes.

#### **Jurisdiction-specific data issues**

New South Wales implemented a new client management system in 2017–18 which affects data for this report in the following ways:

- Substantiations data are unavailable for reporting in 2017–18 and New South Wales is excluded from trend data for that year. New South Wales has remedied this issue and provided substantiations data for 2018–19.
- New South Wales has some data quality issues for Indigenous status arising from the introduction of a new client management system. This may mean some rate ratios for 2018–19 are overstated due to a larger percentage of records with missing Indigenous status.
- Data is unavailable for households commencing and exiting care.

Due to data quality issues, Tasmania had a higher proportion of children with 'Unknown' Indigenous status in 2017–18. Tasmania has undertaken remediation work to address this issue and has since re-supplied data for reporting of 2017–18 information. As a result, trends for Indigenous children in this report will not match previous versions of *Child protection Australia* reports.

Intensive family support services data are unavailable for Queensland in 2018–19. Queensland is working to improve the quality and completeness of data provided by non-government service providers.

## How is this report structured?

There are 8 chapters in this report, each providing information and data on children who are, or have been, involved with different components of the child protection system:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – Children receiving child protection services

Chapter 3 – Notifications, investigations and substantiations

Chapter 4 – Care and protection orders

Chapter 5 – Out-of-home care

Chapter 6 – Permanency

Chapter 7 – Carers

Chapter 8 – Intensive family support services

The supplementary data tables referred to in this report (prefixed with 'S' for supplementary, 'T' for trends, or 'P' for population data) are available to download from <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/data>>. Online appendixes referred to in this report provide further technical notes for some analyses and information and context for jurisdictional policies and practices that can affect the data reported. Appendixes B to G are available to download online <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/related-material>>.

## 2 Children receiving child protection services

### Key findings

- About 170,200 children (1 in 33) received child protection services in 2018–19.
- 58% of these children (97,900) were the subject of an investigation only.
- 68% of children receiving services were repeat clients.
- About 51,500 (1 in 6) Aboriginal and Torres Strait children received child protection services in 2018–19.

### What services are provided by the child protection system?

Child protection authorities provide multiple services to vulnerable children, such as case management, referral to support services, investigations of notified child abuse/neglect, provision of care and protection orders and out-of-home care placements. A summary of child protection services reported in *Child protection Australia* is presented in Table 2.1. A child may receive 1 or more of these services depending on their circumstances.

**Table 2.1: Services for vulnerable children**

Service	When does a child receive this service?	What's involved?
Investigation	Children become the subject of an investigation when a child protection department receives a notification of child maltreatment that meets a threshold for further action.	Child protection workers look into a claim of child maltreatment. This includes a range of information gathering activities such as interviews, record checks and home visits.
Care and protection order	Orders are granted for children who have been found to be the victims of child abuse/neglect or are in need of protection. In most cases this occurs following a substantiation, however orders can be made to remove children from unsafe environments immediately.	An order conferring legal responsibility for a child is made through the courts. This has the effect of transferring parental responsibility for the child to the child protection department, a nominated carer or initiating supervision of parents.
Out-of-home care	Out-of-home care placements are provided to children who are unable to live at home. This may be for child protection reasons or to provide respite for parents.	A child is placed in alternative accommodation as they are unable to live at home. The type of placement is dependent upon each child's circumstances.
Intensive family support service	Families can be referred to intensive family support services at any time. Child protection departments may utilise these services in less severe cases and to help facilitate reunification of families.	Families are referred to these services for advice, education and support. The aim is to prevent separation of children from parents and to achieve reunification where possible.

In this report, children receiving child protection services are those children aged 0–17 who in 2018–19 were:

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

Box 2.1 outlines data limitations for reporting on children receiving child protection services.

### **Box 2.1: Data limitations for children receiving child protection services**

There are significant differences in jurisdictional policy and practice regarding the administration of child protection services. Comparing data across jurisdictions should be done with caution (refer to Appendixes B to G online).

Some notable issues which affect the completeness and interpretability of the data presented in this chapter include:

- In 2017–18, New South Wales was unable to provide data on substantiations due to the implementation of a new client management system. Therefore, substantiation data for 2017–18 excludes New South Wales.
- From 2017–18, New South Wales changed the way investigations of notifications are counted to include only field assessments. This results in lower counts of investigations from 2017–18 onwards.
- In July 2018, the Northern Territory introduced the One Child One Case policy which has meant that a new investigation may not be required for subsequent notifications if a child has a current open case. Consequently, fewer investigations were commenced in 2018–19 when compared with previous periods. See Appendix D (online) for more information.
- South Australia and Tasmania are not able to include in their data children in care where a financial payment is offered but is declined by the carer. This results in lower counts of children in care for these jurisdictions when compared to other jurisdictions.
- ‘Children receiving child protection services’ is not a total count of the 3 areas; it is a count of unique children across the 3 areas.

## **What services did children receive?**

In 2018–19, about 170,200 (1 in 33) children received child protection services (Figure 2.1), a rate of 30 per 1,000 children aged 0–17.

Of children receiving child protection services in 2018–19:

- 115,700 were the subject of an investigation (21 per 1,000)
- 69,500 were on a care and protection order (12 per 1,000)
- 55,000 were in out-of-home care (10 per 1,000).

These rates varied across jurisdictions (Table 2.2). 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-2018-19/related-material](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/related-material)>.

The services provided to children depend upon their individual circumstances. Following investigation, some cases of child abuse/neglect may require subsequent interventions, such as a care and protection order and/or out-of-home care placement. In other cases, an investigation may determine a child is safe at home and not require any further intervention.

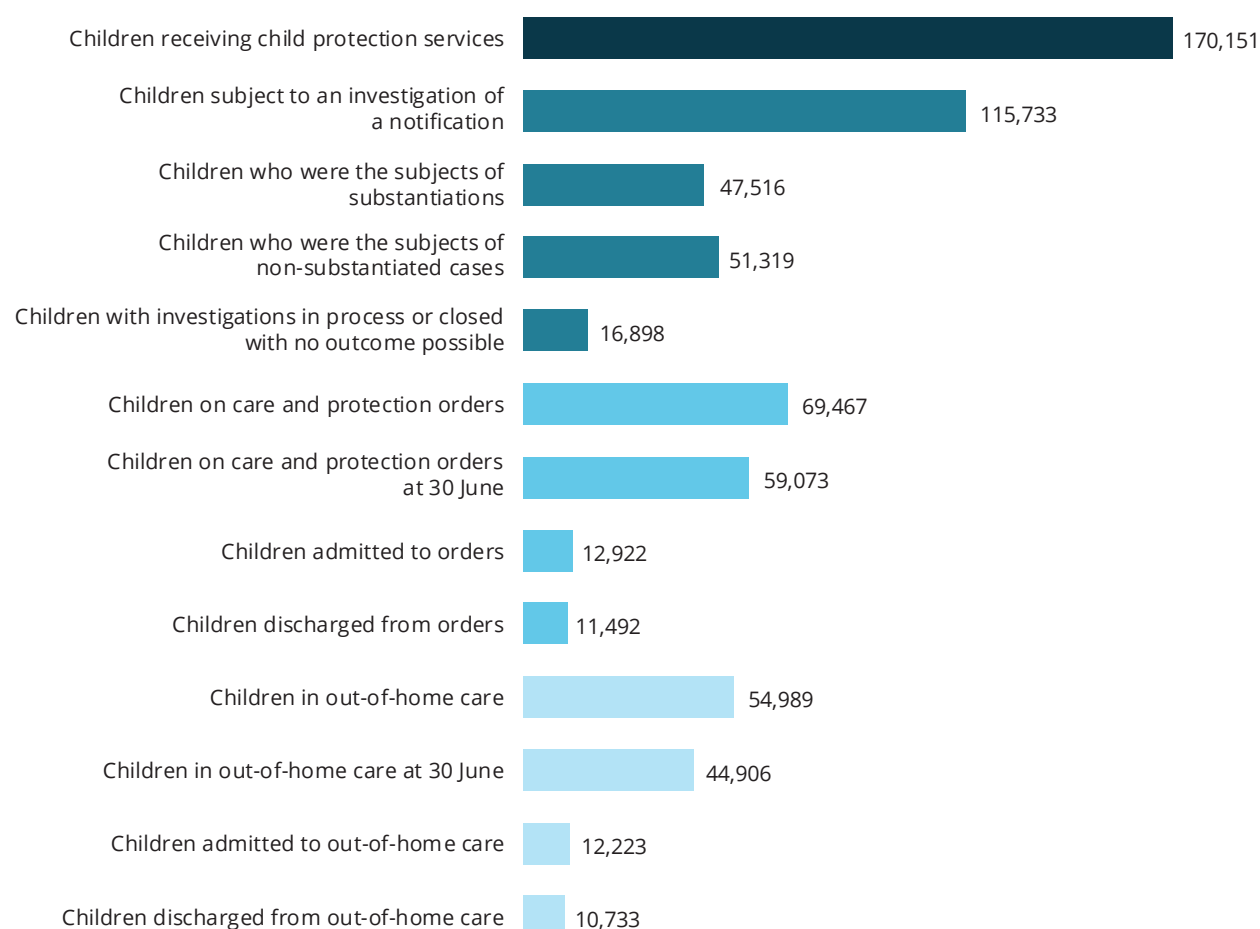


Because of this, children may be involved in more than 1 component of the child protection system. As such, the count of children in each component does not sum to the total children receiving child protection services (see Figure 2.3 for the overlap of services received).

Children who were only the subject of a notification that was not subsequently investigated have not been included in this analysis of children receiving child protection services. 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 8 for information about children receiving intensive family support services.

**Figure 2.1: Children receiving child protection services, 2018–19 (number)**



**Notes**

1. 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.
2. 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).
3. The scope of out-of-home care has been revised in 2018–19 to focus on children without a permanent placement. As a result, 2018–19 data should not be compared to previous years. See Chapter 5 for further information.
4. Refer to the Glossary for definitions.

Sources: Tables 2.2, 4.1 and supplementary data tables (online) S3.3, S5.1, S5.2, and T2.

**Table 2.2: Children receiving child protection services, by state or territory, 2018–19 (number and rate)**

Child protection component	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(b)(c)</sup>	ACT	NT <sup>(d)</sup>	Total
<b>Number</b>									
Children who were the subject of an investigation of a notification	38,505	33,511	21,050	12,408	3,304	1,065	1,455	4,435	115,733
Children on care and protection orders	23,538	18,384	12,147	6,686	4,679	1,689	1,007	1,337	69,467
Children in out-of-home care	19,342	12,093	10,222	5,591	4,309	1,291	842	1,299	54,989
<b>Children receiving child protection services</b>	<b>56,398</b>	<b>47,271</b>	<b>31,596</b>	<b>17,481</b>	<b>6,996</b>	<b>2,565</b>	<b>2,323</b>	<b>5,521</b>	<b>170,151</b>
<b>Number per 1,000</b>									
Children who were the subject of an investigation of a notification	21.8	23.7	18.0	20.7	9.0	9.5	15.4	71.4	20.7
Children on care and protection orders	13.3	13.0	10.4	11.2	12.7	15.0	10.7	21.5	12.4
Children in out-of-home care	10.9	8.6	8.7	9.3	11.7	11.5	8.9	20.9	9.8
<b>Children receiving child protection services</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>33.5</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>88.9</b>	<b>30.5</b>

(a) New South Wales data for 'Investigations' are not comparable to data published in prior years. 'Investigations' counts have changed to only include field assessments.

(b) Tasmanian data 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. 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.

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

(d) In July 2018 the Northern Territory introduced the One Child One Case policy to improve the way in which Territory Families responds to subsequent notifications for children who have a current open case. Consequently, fewer investigations have been commenced. Subsequent notifications redirected to an open Investigation may lead to longer investigation timeframes. See Appendix D (online) for more information.

#### Notes

1. The number of children who were the subject of an investigation is not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. '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.
3. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care (see Chapter 5 for more details). Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
4. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

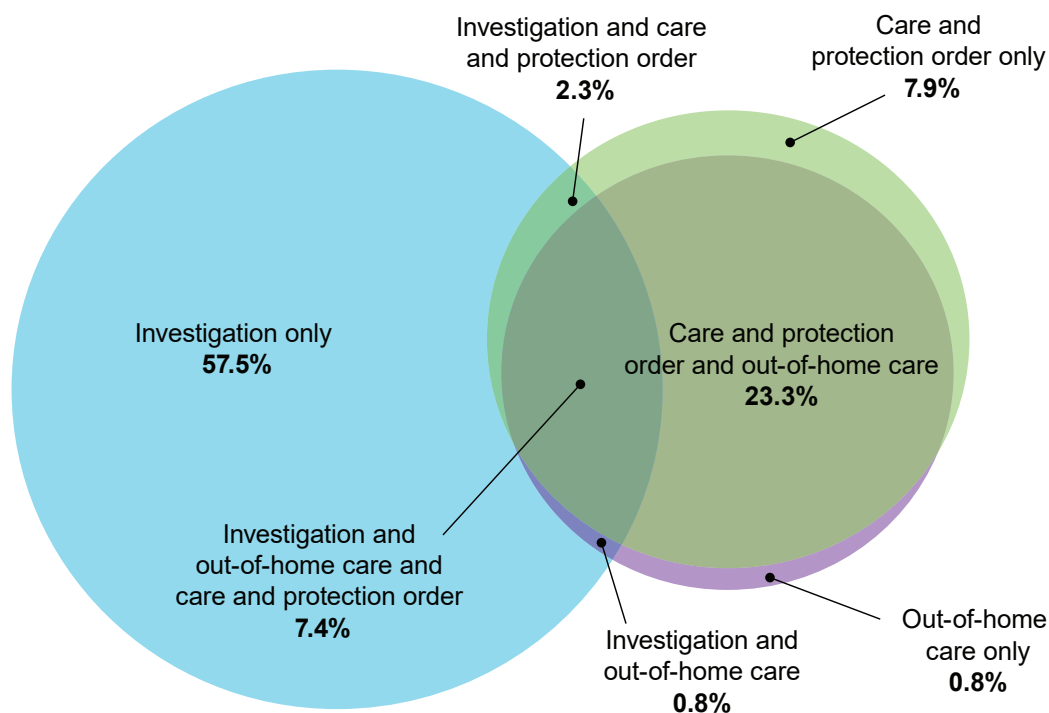
Because children may receive a combination of child protection services, there are links and overlaps between:

- notifications, investigations, and substantiations
- care and protection orders
- out-of-home care.

In 2018–19, 58% of the 170,200 children receiving child protection services were the subject of an investigation only, and nearly one-quarter (23%) 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 2018–19 (AIHW 2016a, 2017, 2018b, 2019b).

**Figure 2.2: Children receiving child protection services, by component of services received, 2018–19 (per cent)**



*Note:* From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care (see Chapter 5 for more details). Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

*Source:* Supplementary data table (online) S2.1.

Children who were the subject of only an investigation represented a large proportion of the activity in the child protection system. Maltreatment was not substantiated for 57% of these children (Table 2.3).

**Table 2.3: Children who were the subject of a finalised investigation only, by investigation outcome and state or territory, 2018–19 (number and per cent)**

Investigation outcome	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT <sup>(a)</sup>	Total
<b>Number</b>									
Substantiated	11,743	13,525	4,115	3,599	1,012	395	176	1,023	35,588
Not substantiated	13,159	13,276	12,792	4,491	875	131	1,080	2,085	47,889
<i>Total children in finalised investigations</i>	<i>24,902</i>	<i>26,801</i>	<i>16,907</i>	<i>8,090</i>	<i>1,887</i>	<i>526</i>	<i>1,256</i>	<i>3,108</i>	<i>83,477</i>
<b>Per cent</b>									
Substantiated	47.2	50.5	24.3	44.5	53.6	75.1	14.0	32.9	42.6
Not substantiated	52.8	49.5	75.7	55.5	46.4	24.9	86.0	67.1	57.4
<i>Total children in finalised investigations</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>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>Total children subject to an investigation only</b>	<b>32,300</b>	<b>27,527</b>	<b>18,801</b>	<b>10,642</b>	<b>2,262</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>1,307</b>	<b>4,184</b>	<b>97,882</b>

(a) In July 2018 the Northern Territory introduced the One Child One Case policy to improve the way in which Territory Families responds to subsequent notifications for children who have a current open case. Consequently, fewer investigations have been commenced. Subsequent notifications redirected to an open Investigation may lead to longer investigation timeframes. See Appendix D (online) for more information.

*Notes*

1. The data presented in this table is not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. This table includes data for children whose only contact with child protection services during 2018–19 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 supplementary data table (online) S3.3.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

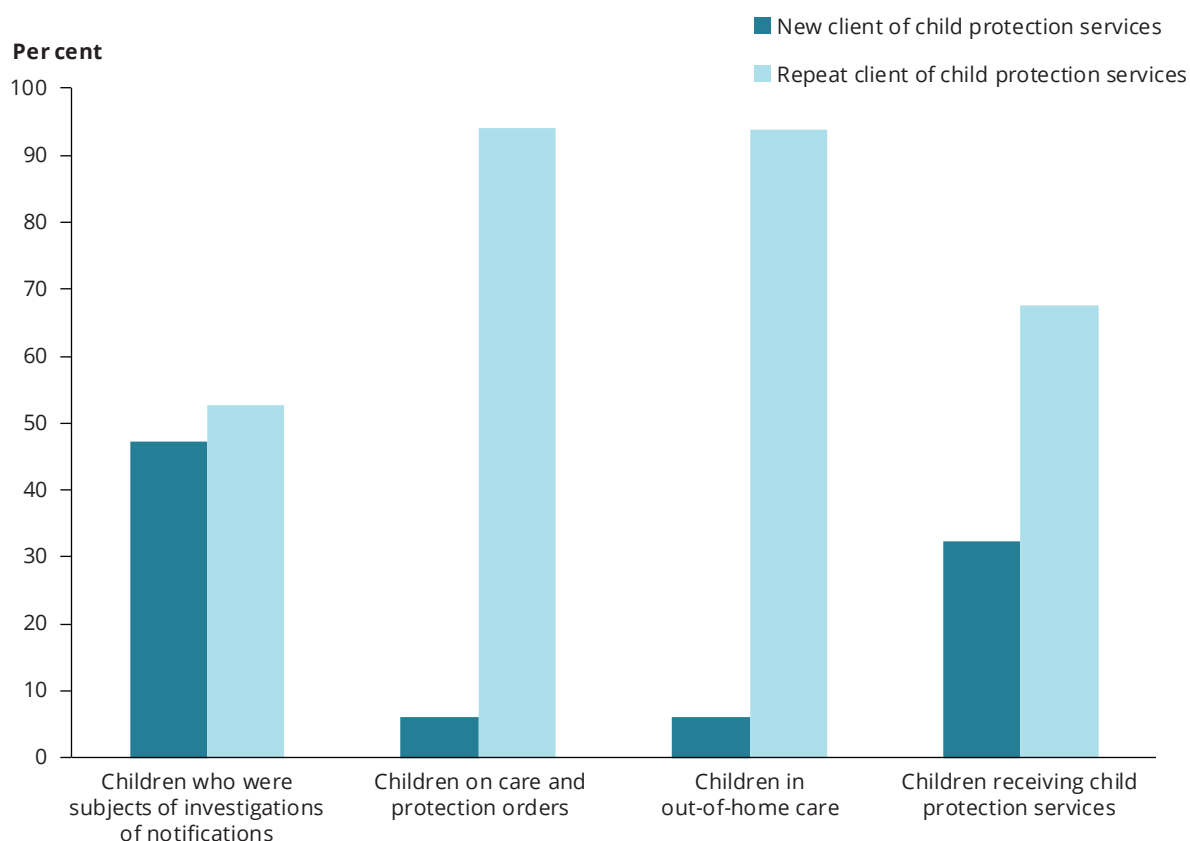
## What were the characteristics of children receiving child protection services?

### 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 (that is, repeat clients), and whether this differs across the system components.

Over two-thirds (68%) of children receiving child protection services were repeat clients in 2018–19 (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 (53%).

**Figure 2.3: New and repeat clients receiving child protection services, by service type, 2018–19 (per cent)**



*Note:* From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care (see Chapter 5 for more details). Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

*Source:* Supplementary data table (online) S2.2.

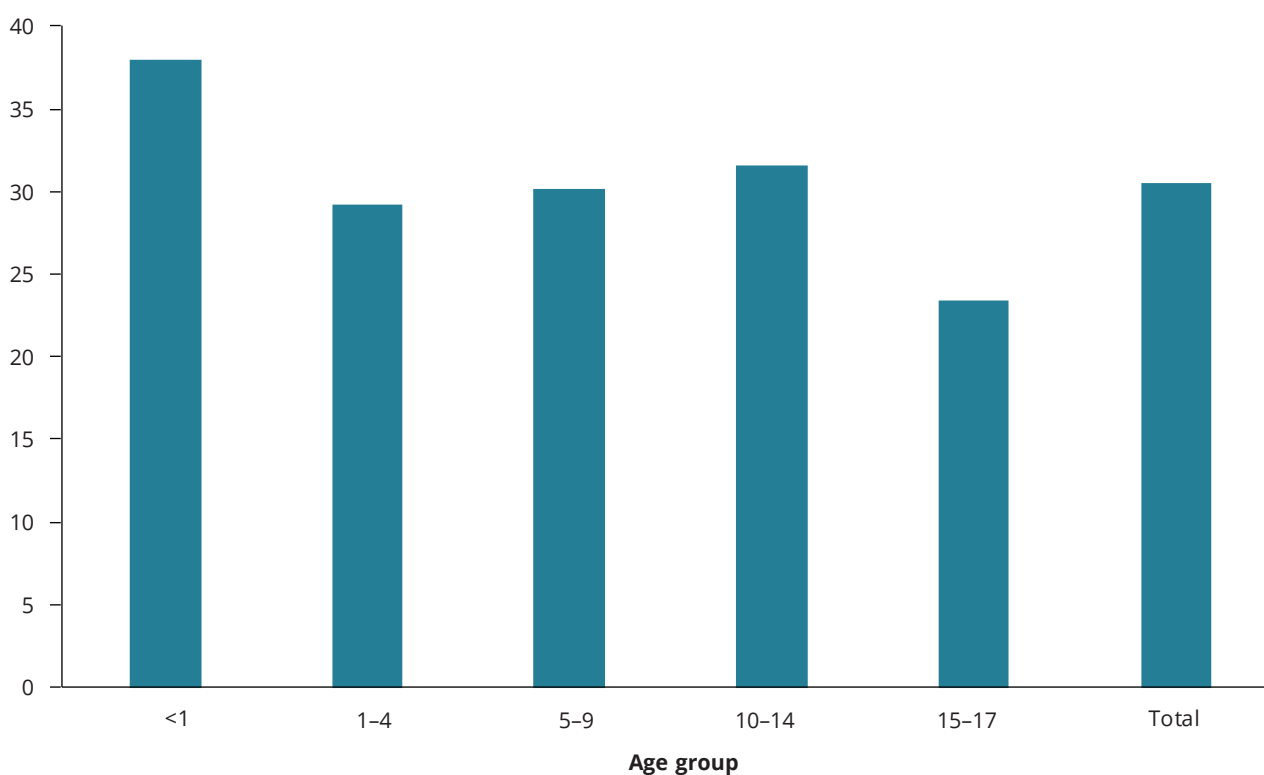
## Age

Across Australia, 11,500 infants (children aged under 1) received child protection services in 2018–19. Infants were also most likely (38 per 1,000 children) to have received child protection services, while those aged 15–17 were least likely (23 per 1,000) (Figure 2.4).

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, 2018–19 (rate)**

Number per 1,000



**Notes**

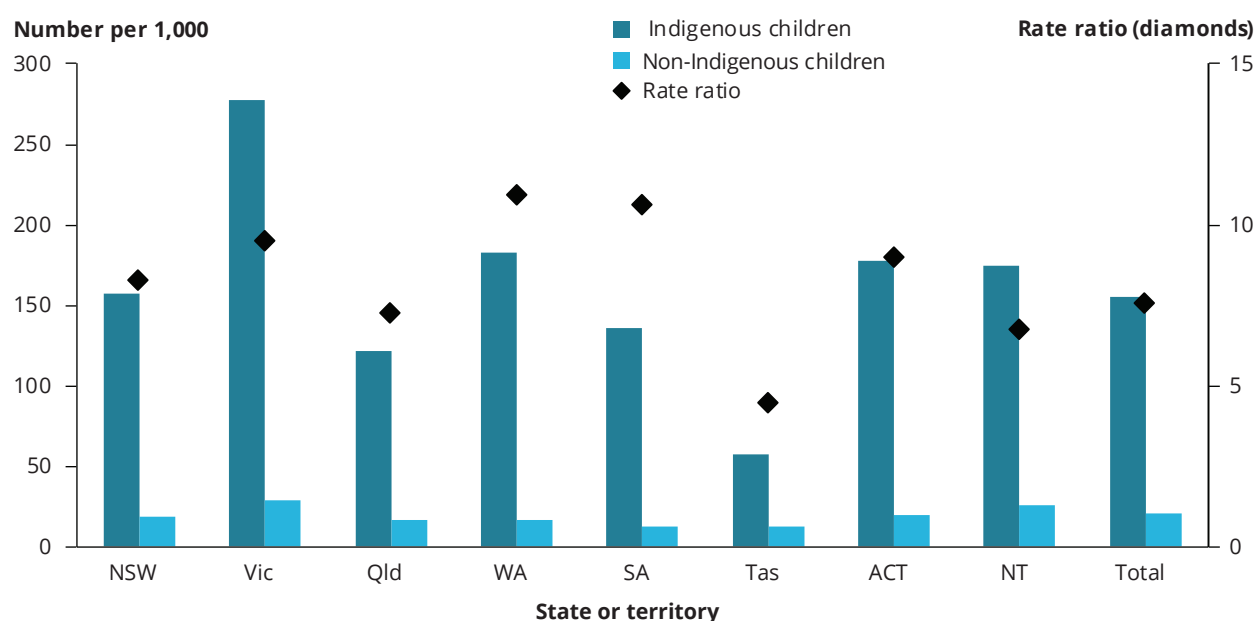
1. Unborn children might be covered under child protection legislation, so are included in the 'Total' rate. However, they are excluded from rate calculation for the 'less than 1' age category.
2. Age is calculated as at the start of the financial year (that is, July 2018) if the first contact began 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 (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S2.3.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

In 2018–19, 51,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children received child protection services, a rate of 156 per 1,000 Indigenous children. This was almost 8 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (21 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children) (Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.5: Children receiving child protection services, by Indigenous status and state or territory, 2018–19 (rate and rate ratio)**



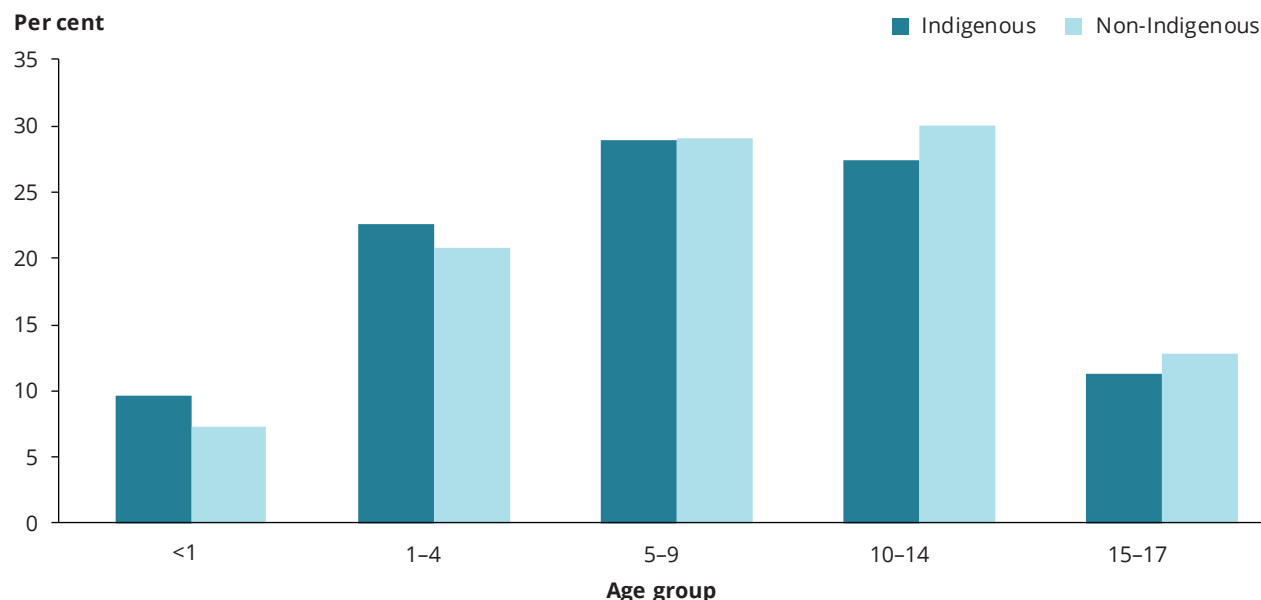
### Notes

1. In Tasmania, the proportion of children whose Indigenous status is unknown impacts the reliability of these data.
2. Data presented in this figure are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C for more information.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S2.3.

A slightly higher proportion (32%) of Indigenous children receiving child protection services were aged under 5, compared with 28% of non-Indigenous children (Figure 2.6).

**Figure 2.6: Children receiving child protection services, by age group and Indigenous status, 2018–19 (per cent)**



*Note:* Age is calculated as at the start of the financial year (that is 1 July 2018) 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:* Supplementary data table (online) S2.3.

## Has the provision of child protection services changed over time?

### Trends for children

The number of children receiving child protection services rose about 12% over 5 years—from about 152,000 children in 2014–15 to about 170,200 children in 2018–19. The rate of children receiving child protection services rose slightly from 29 to 30 per 1,000 children in the same period (Table A1).

For state/territory trend data on the number and rate of children who received child protection services between 2014–15 and 2018–19, see Table A1.

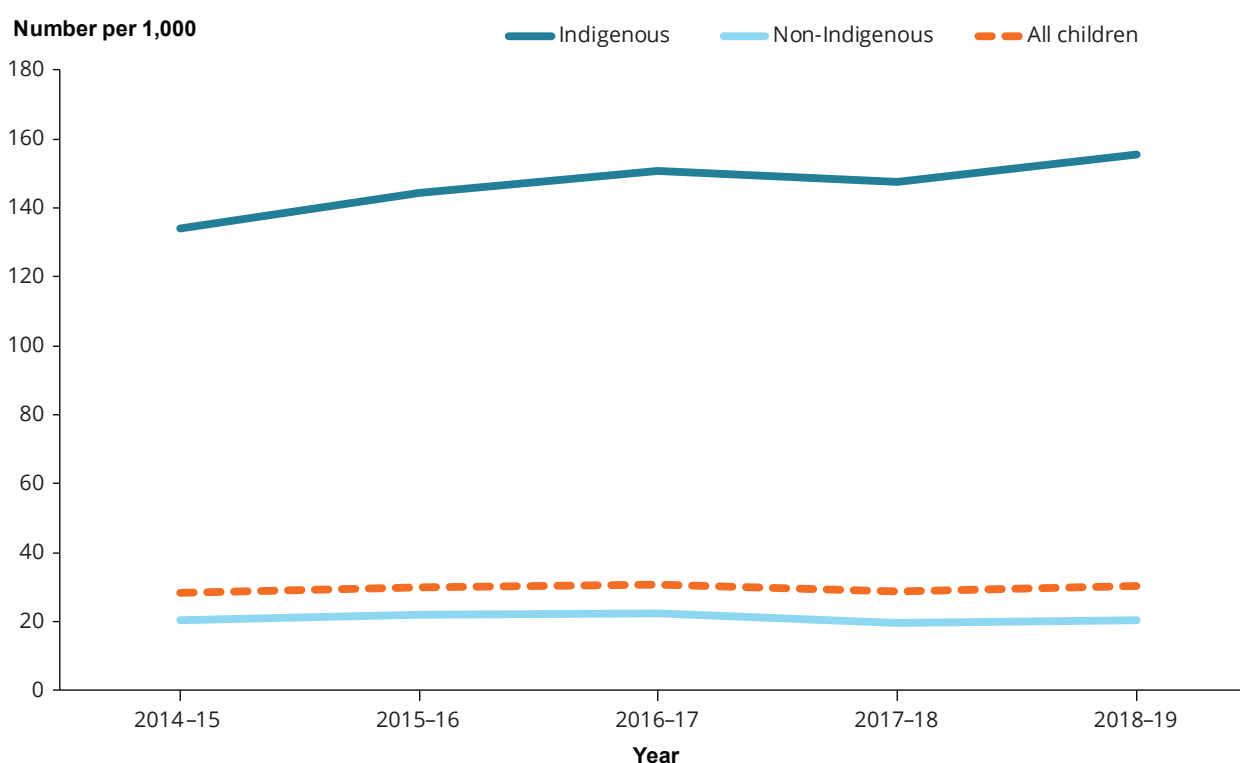
Increases over time in the number or rate of children receiving child protection services or support might relate to changes in the underlying rate of child abuse and neglect, increases in notifications and access to services, or a combination of these factors.



## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

The number of Indigenous children receiving child protection services rose between 2014–15 and 2018–19, from 42,900 to 51,500. This was reflected in the rate, which rose from 134 to 156 per 1,000 Indigenous children in the same period. For non-Indigenous children the rates have remained relatively steady at 21 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children between 2014–15 and 2018–19, with minor fluctuations during the period (Figure 2.7).

**Figure 2.7: Children receiving child protection services, by Indigenous status, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (rate)**



### Notes

1. Data presented in this figure are not comparable or over time, due to differences in the way jurisdictions have collected and reported data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. Due to data quality issues, Tasmania had a higher proportion of children with unknown Indigenous status in 2017–18. Tasmania has undertaken data remediation work to address this issue and has since re-supplied data for reporting of 2017–18 information. As a result, data presented in this report will not match previous versions of *Child protection Australia*. The proportion of children whose Indigenous status is still unknown impacts the reliability of these data.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) T2.

### 3 Notifications, investigations, and substantiations

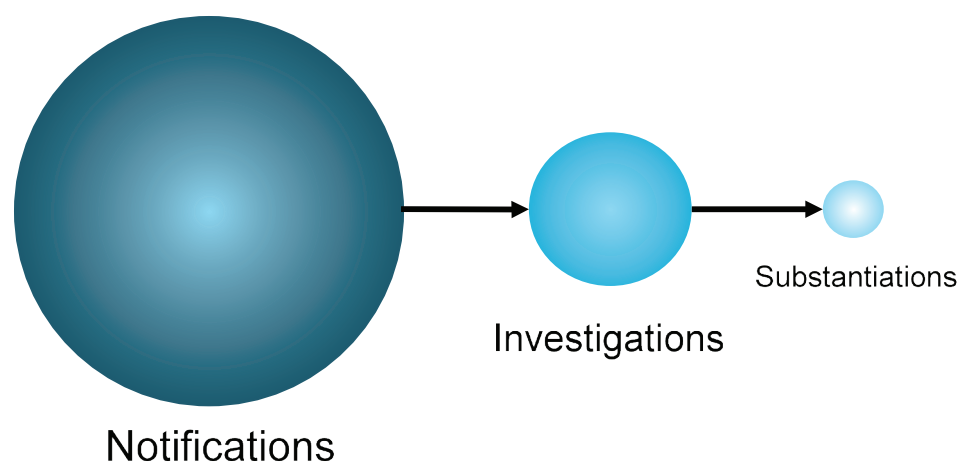
#### Key findings

- 171,300 investigations were conducted for 115,700 children in 2018–19.
- 62,700 claims of child maltreatment were substantiated for 47,500 children.
- 1 in 26 (12,600) Indigenous children were the subjects of substantiations, making them 6 times as likely to be the subject of a substantiation as non-Indigenous children.

#### How does the process for determining child maltreatment work?

Notifications, investigations and substantiations are the entry point for children into the child protection system. These components are sequential, with an initial notification of child maltreatment made to a child protection department, followed by an investigation of the alleged maltreatment (if required), and concluding with a substantiation decision (Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1: Overview of notifications, investigations and substantiations**



The data in this chapter relate to notifications that departments responsible for child protection received between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019 (see Table 3.1 and Appendix C for further information <[www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/related-material](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/related-material)>).

**Table 3.1: The process of substantiating a claim of child maltreatment**

Component of the system	What is involved?	When does this take place?
Notification	A notification is a report made to a child protection department alleging child abuse/neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child. These reports can be made by individuals or organisations.	Notifications are usually the entry point for children into the system. The notification triggers an intake process where child protection workers evaluate the report and determine what action to take. The threshold for recording a notification differs in each jurisdiction (see Appendix C online).
Investigation	The process by which departments gather more information about a child involved in a notification. Staff assess the harm or degree of harm to the child, and their protective needs. Investigations also include sighting or interviewing the child where practical.	An investigation is undertaken when a notification of alleged abuse meets the threshold for further action. This threshold differs in each jurisdiction (see Appendix C online).
Substantiation	A substantiation is the result of a finalised investigation which concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been, is being or is likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. This may also include cases where children have no suitable caregiver.	A substantiation decision is part of finalising an investigation. The notification will either be 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated'. A notification will be substantiated only if it meets a threshold of harm. This threshold differs in each jurisdiction (see Appendix C online).

Box 3.1 outlines data limitations for reporting on children who are the subjects of notifications, investigations and substantiations.

### **Box 3.1: Data limitations for children who are the subjects of notifications, investigations and substantiations**

Although specifications for notifications, investigations and substantiations have been agreed for national reporting, there are differences in jurisdictional legislation, policy and practice which influence the reported data. Notification counts are not comparable across jurisdictions and differences in the initial count of notifications have a flow-on effect on other data, including the number of investigations, substantiations, and substantiations per child. Refer to Appendixes B to G (online) before comparing data across jurisdictions.

Some notable issues which affect the completeness and interpretability of the data presented in this chapter include:

- In 2017–18, New South Wales was unable to provide data on substantiations due to the implementation of a new client management system. Therefore, substantiation data for 2017–18 excludes New South Wales.
- From 2017–18, New South Wales changed the way investigations of notifications are counted to include only field assessments. This results in lower counts of investigations from 2017–18 onwards for New South Wales.
- In July 2018, the Northern Territory introduced the One Child One Case policy which has meant that a new investigation may not be required for subsequent notifications if a child has a current open case. Consequently, fewer investigations were commenced in 2018–19 when compared with previous periods. See Appendix D (online) for more information.
- Analysis by co-occurrence of abuse, remoteness and socioeconomic area should be interpreted with caution as the data items are not always complete.

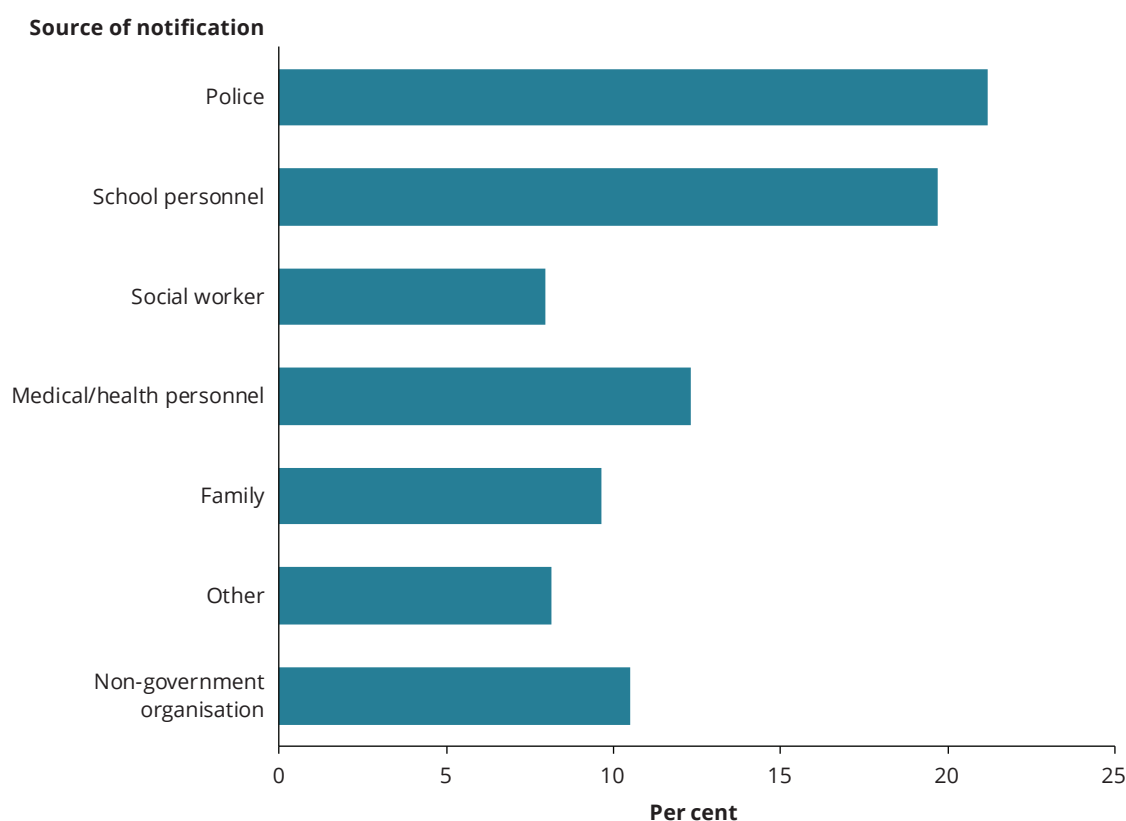
## How many notifications and investigations occurred?

Of the approximately 451,200 notifications in 2018–19, about 171,300 (38%) were assessed as requiring further investigation and the rest (279,900 or 62%) were dealt with by other means, such as by being referred to a support service (Supplementary table S3.1).

For investigations in 2018–19, the most common source of the notification was police (21%), followed by school personnel (20%) (Figure 3.2). Nationally, less than 1 per cent of notifications came directly from the child involved (Supplementary table S3.2).

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](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/child-protection/child-protection-legislation-by-jurisdiction).

**Figure 3.2: Investigations, by most common source of notification, 2018–19 (per cent)**



*Note:* Not all reporting categories are shown—see Supplementary table S3.2 for more information.

*Source:* Supplementary data table (online) S3.2.

Finalised investigations are notifications made during 2018–19 that were investigated and for which an outcome of either ‘substantiated’ or ‘not substantiated’ was recorded by 31 August 2019. 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 (7%, or about 33,400 in 2018–19) are not reported in the data for this or subsequent reporting periods (Supplementary table S3.1).

Almost half (48%) of the children in finalised investigations were the subjects of substantiations in 2018–19 (Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3: Children who were the subjects of finalised investigations, by outcome and state or territory, 2018–19 (per cent)**



*Note:* Data presented in this figure are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C (online) for more information.

*Source:* Supplementary data table (online) S3.3.

Children might be involved in multiple statutory child protection cases during any given year. Across Australia in 2018–19, the total number of notifications (about 451,200) involved about 269,200 children. The number of substantiations (about 62,700) involved about 47,500 children (Supplementary table T1).

These data reflect that some children were the subject of more than 1 notification and/or substantiation—17% were the subject of more than 1 substantiation during the year (Supplementary table S3.4). On average, around 2 notifications were received per child, and there was 1 substantiated claim of abuse/neglect per child.

## What types of abuse were substantiated?

### 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 2018–19, emotional abuse was the most common primary type of abuse substantiated for children (54%), followed by neglect (21%), physical abuse (15%), and sexual abuse (10%), with some variation between jurisdictions (Figure 3.4).

**Figure 3.4: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications received, by primary type of abuse or neglect and state or territory, 2018–19 (per cent)**



**Notes**

1. Data presented in this figure are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
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 for the year.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S3.5.

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

Table 3.2 shows the recorded co-occurrence of primary types of abuse or neglect with other types of abuse or neglect. As well as being the most common primary types reported, emotional abuse (37%) and neglect (34%) were also the most likely types to co-occur.

Emotional abuse co-occurred in half (52%) of substantiations where physical abuse was the primary type of abuse or neglect, and in a quarter (26%) of substantiations where sexual abuse was the primary type.

Neglect co-occurred in 38% of substantiations where emotional abuse was the primary type of abuse, and in 31% 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 less than 4% (Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2: Co-occurrence of substantiated types of abuse and neglect in substantiated notifications, by primary type of abuse or neglect, 2018–19 (per cent)**

Primary type of abuse or neglect	Co-occurring type of abuse or neglect <sup>(a)(b)</sup>				Total substantiations <sup>(c)</sup>
	Physical abuse	Sexual abuse	Emotional abuse	Neglect	
Physical abuse	..	3.2	51.8	30.9	9,354
Sexual abuse	3.4	..	25.9	15.5	5,950
Emotional abuse	27.0	2.4	..	37.8	31,631
Neglect	4.2	2.0	31.9	..	15,586
<b>Average co-occurrence<sup>(d)</sup></b>	24.6	2.4	36.8	33.6	62,521

(a) Excludes 2,448 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 186 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.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

## What were the characteristics of children with substantiated abuse or neglect?

### 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 2018–19, 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 (16 per 1,000 children) to be the subjects of substantiations, and those aged 15–17 least likely (5 per 1,000). This pattern was consistent across jurisdictions (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications, by age group and state or territory, 2018–19 (rate)**

Age group	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number per 1,000</b>									
Less than 1	11.4	27.8	8.0	13.0	17.6	7.8	6.9	44.5	15.8
1–4	7.8	14.1	5.1	8.8	5.9	6.4	2.9	20.7	8.9
5–9	7.3	13.1	5.0	8.0	4.7	5.0	2.4	18.2	8.2
10–14	8.1	13.4	4.9	6.8	3.2	3.7	2.8	17.6	8.2
15–17	5.4	7.5	2.6	3.5	1.8	2.6	0.7	9.3	4.8
0–17	7.5	13.4	4.8	7.5	4.8	4.7	2.6	18.8	8.2
<b>All children</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Children in substantiations (number)</b>	<b>14,131</b>	<b>18,883</b>	<b>6,047</b>	<b>4,717</b>	<b>1,745</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>1,167</b>	<b>47,516</b>

*Notes*

1. Data presented in this table are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiation. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. 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.
3. 'All children' includes children of unknown age.
4. 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).

See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

## Sex

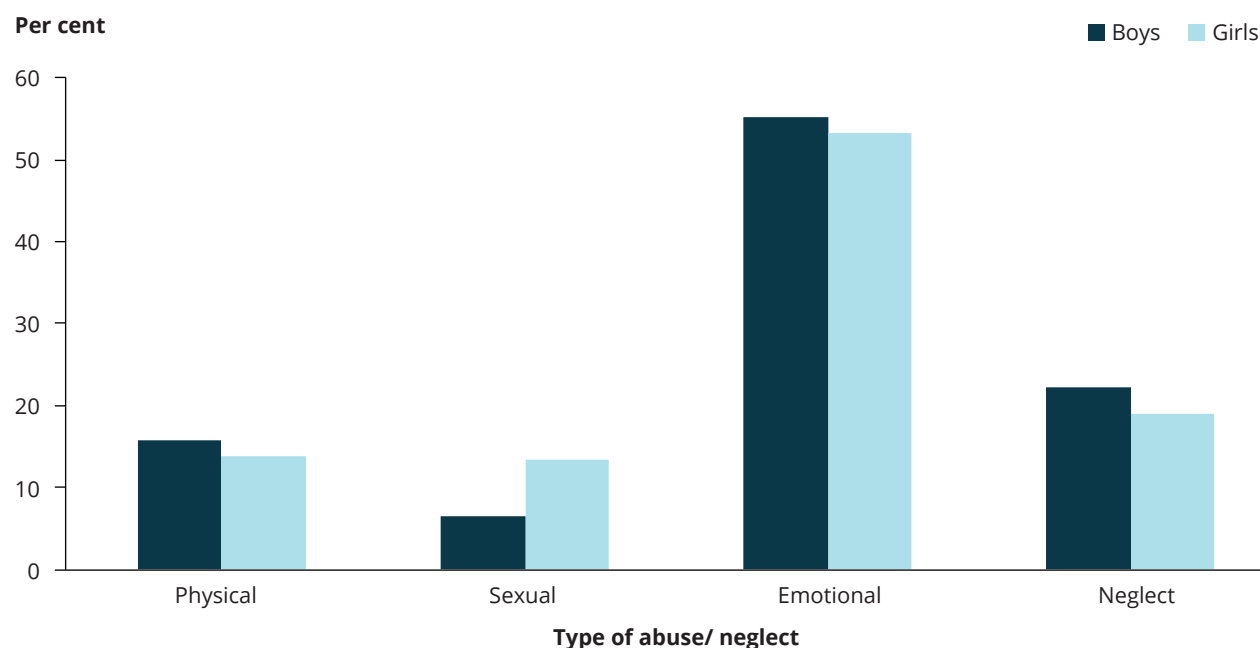
Slightly more girls (23,900) than boys (23,000) were the subjects of substantiations (Supplementary table S3.5).

A higher proportion of girls (13%) were the subjects of substantiations for sexual abuse than boys (7%) (Figure 3.5). This is consistent with recorded crime statistics for sexual assault (ABS 2019e).

In contrast, boys had slightly higher percentages of substantiations for emotional abuse, neglect and physical abuse (Figure 3.5).



**Figure 3.5: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications, by primary type of abuse or neglect and sex, 2018–19 (per cent)**



*Note:* 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:* Supplementary data table (online) S3.5.

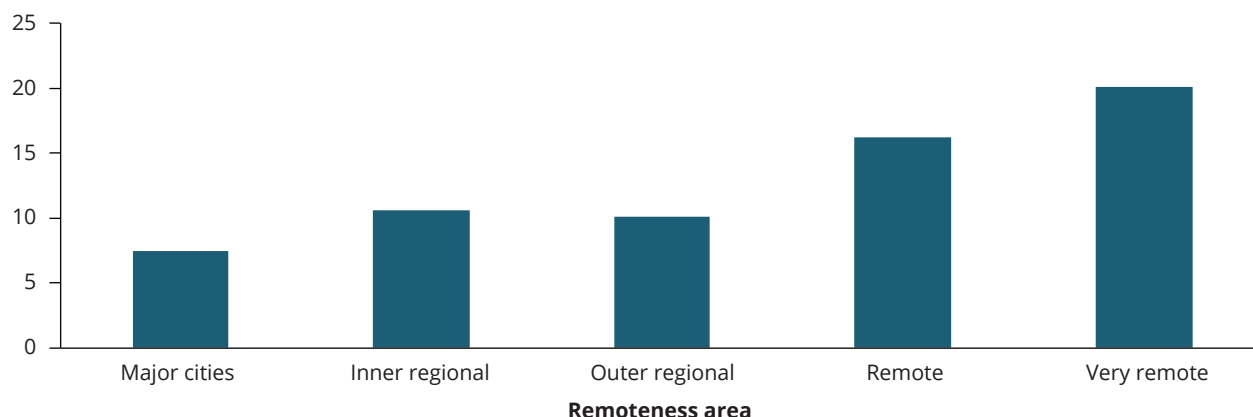
## Remoteness area

Children from geographically remote areas had the highest rates of substantiations—children from *Very remote* areas (20 per 1,000 children) were almost 3 times as likely as those from *Major cities* (7 per 1,000) to be the subject of a substantiation (Figure 3.6).

Of the children who were the subject of a substantiation from *Remote* and *Very Remote* areas, 88% were Indigenous. In *Major cities* only 16% of children subject to substantiations were Indigenous (Supplementary table S3.7a).

**Figure 3.6: Children who were the subjects of substantiations, by remoteness area, 2018–19 (rate)**

Number per 1,000



**Notes**

1. Remoteness data at the time of notification exclude New South Wales, because location data were not available.
2. See Appendix B (online) for more information on the calculation of remoteness areas.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S3.7b.

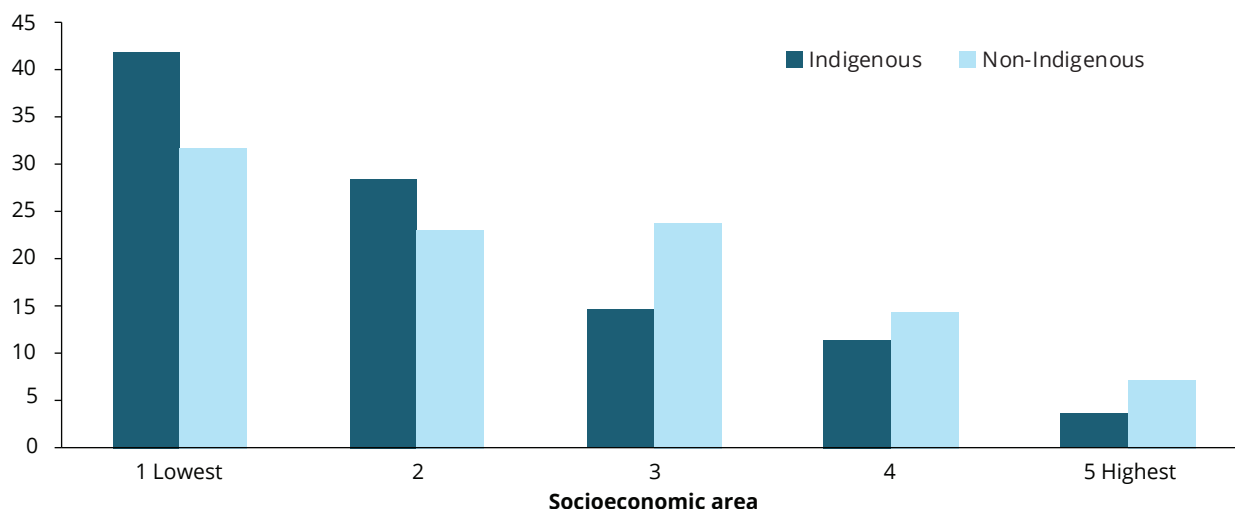
## Socioeconomic area

Children who were the subjects of substantiations were more likely to be from the lowest socioeconomic areas (36% or 11,700 in the lowest socioeconomic area compared with 5% or 1,800 in the highest) (Supplementary table S3.8).

Indigenous children who were the subjects of substantiations were far more likely to be from the lowest socioeconomic areas (43% or 3,500) than non-Indigenous children (33% or 7,900) (Figure 3.7).

**Figure 3.7: Children who were the subjects of substantiations, by socioeconomic area and Indigenous status, 2018–19 (per cent)**

Per cent



**Notes**

1. Socioeconomic data exclude New South Wales, because location data were not available.
2. See Appendix B (online) for more information on the calculation of socioeconomic areas.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S3.8.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

In 2018–19, 12,600 Indigenous children were the subject of a substantiation. This is a rate of 38 per 1,000—6 times the rate of non-Indigenous children (6 per 1,000) (Figure 3.8). This is consistent with findings for previous years (Figure 3.14).

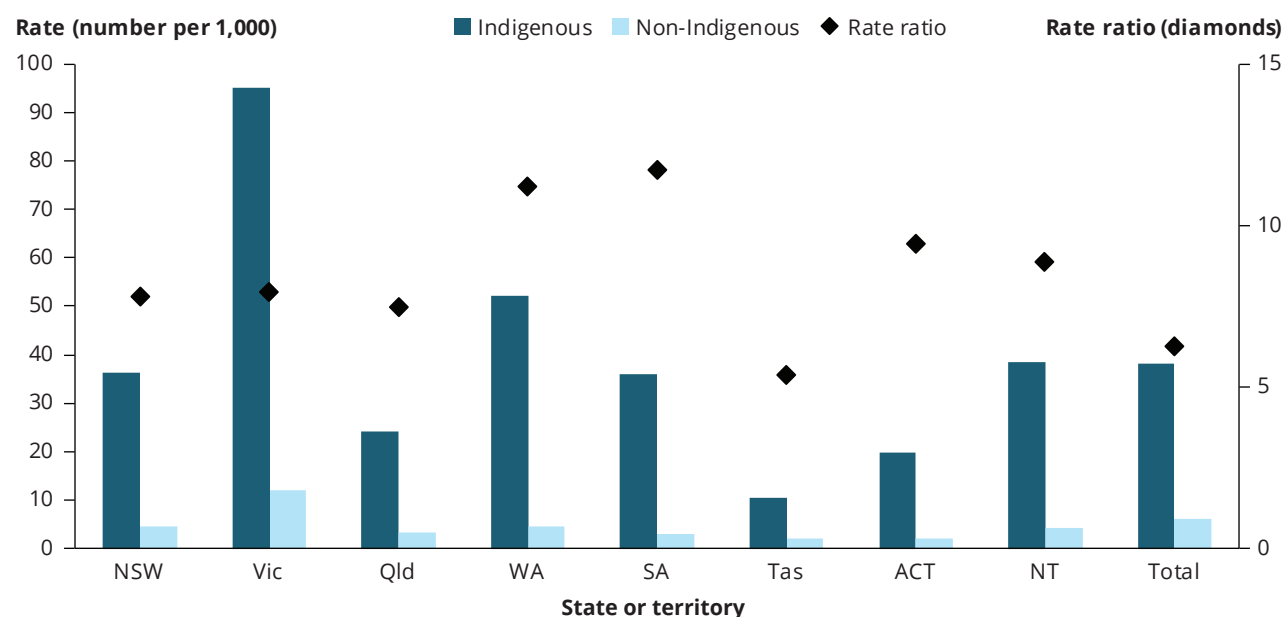
The reasons for the over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection substantiations are complex. Underlying causes include:

- 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 3.8: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications received during 2018–19, by Indigenous status and state or territory (rate and rate ratio)**



### Notes

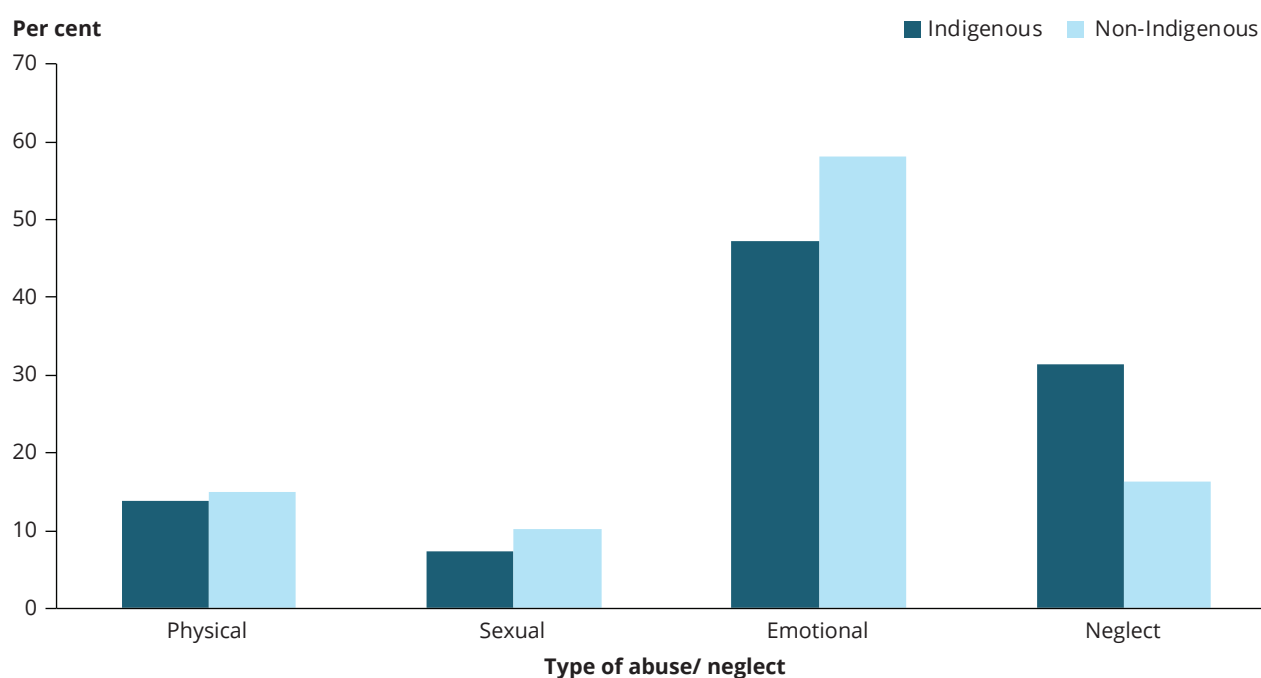
1. In Tasmania, the proportion of children whose Indigenous status is unknown impacts the reliability of these data.
2. Data presented in this figure are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S3.9.

## 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 (31%) than non-Indigenous children (16%), and a lower percentage of substantiations for emotional and sexual abuse (Figure 3.9).

**Figure 3.9: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications, by Indigenous status and type of abuse, 2018–19 (per cent)**



*Note:* 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:* Supplementary data table (online) S3.10.

## Has the number of notifications, investigations and substantiations changed over time?

### Box 3.2: Trend data limitations

New South Wales implemented a new client management system in 2017–18, and provided limited data. As a result, substantiations data are unavailable for this period. New South Wales have remedied this issue and provided substantiations data for 2018–19. Trends in this chapter should be interpreted with caution and should not be compared to previous iterations of *Child protection Australia*.

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

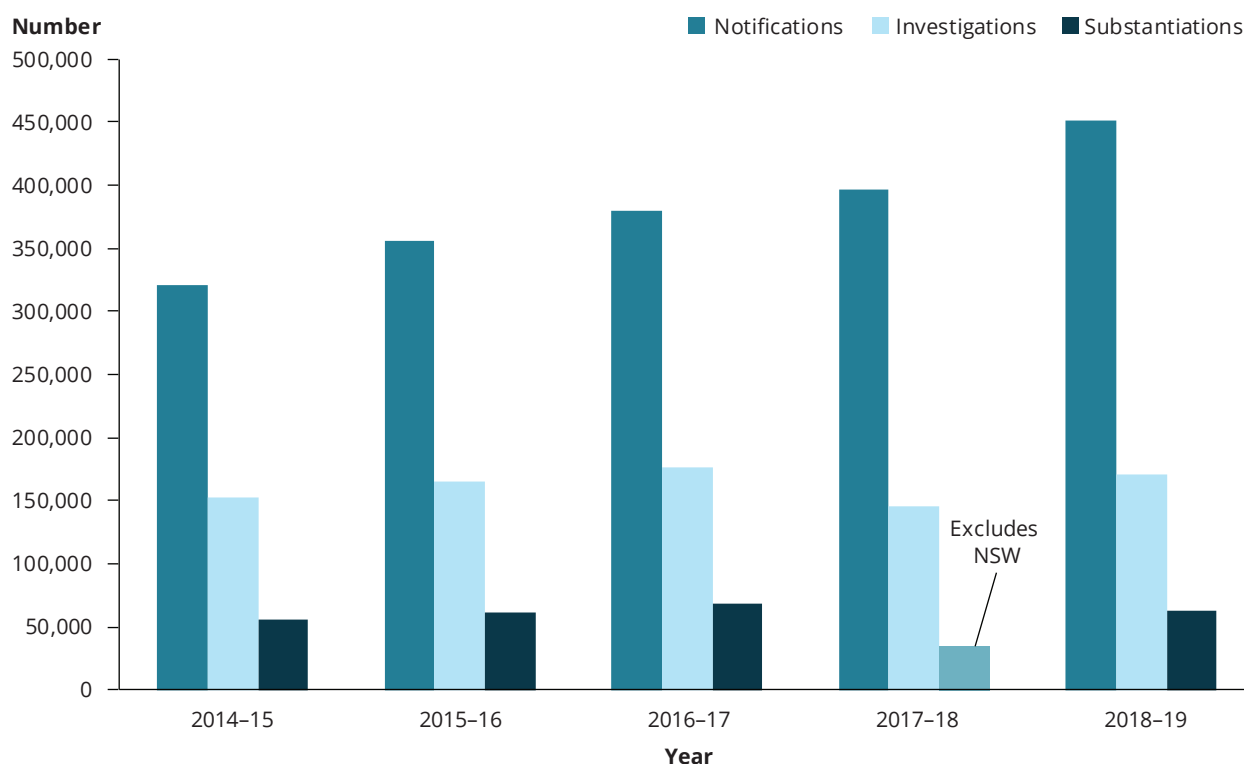
## Trends for notifications, investigations and substantiations

Between 2014–15 and 2018–19, numbers rose by:

- 41% for notifications (320,200 in 2014–15 to 451,200 in 2018–19)
- 13% for investigations (152,100 in 2014–15 to 171,300 in 2018–19)
- 11% for substantiations (56,400 in 2014–15 to 62,700 in 2018–19) (Figure 3.10)

Although nationally notifications and substantiations rose over the 5 years, the size and direction of change varied across jurisdictions (tables S3.11 and S3.12).

**Figure 3.10: Trends in notifications, investigations and substantiations, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (number)**



### Notes

1. Data presented in this figure are not comparable over time due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations and how this has changed over time. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. For 2017–18 onwards, 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.
3. Substantiation data are unavailable for New South Wales for 2017–18, as the state implemented a new client management system during that year.
4. Due to changes in intake practice implemented during 2018–19, the proportion of contacts progressed to notifications has decreased and the number of notifications reported for 2018–19 onwards is not comparable with data for earlier years. Due to changes in the way in which notifications have been defined in Tasmania, the number of notifications reported for 2015–16 onwards is not comparable with data for earlier years as Tasmania has moved from a caller to an agency defined approach.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) T1.

## Trends for children

The rate of children who were the subjects of notifications rose from 39 per 1,000 children in 2014–15 to 48 per 1,000 in 2018–19 (Figure 3.11).

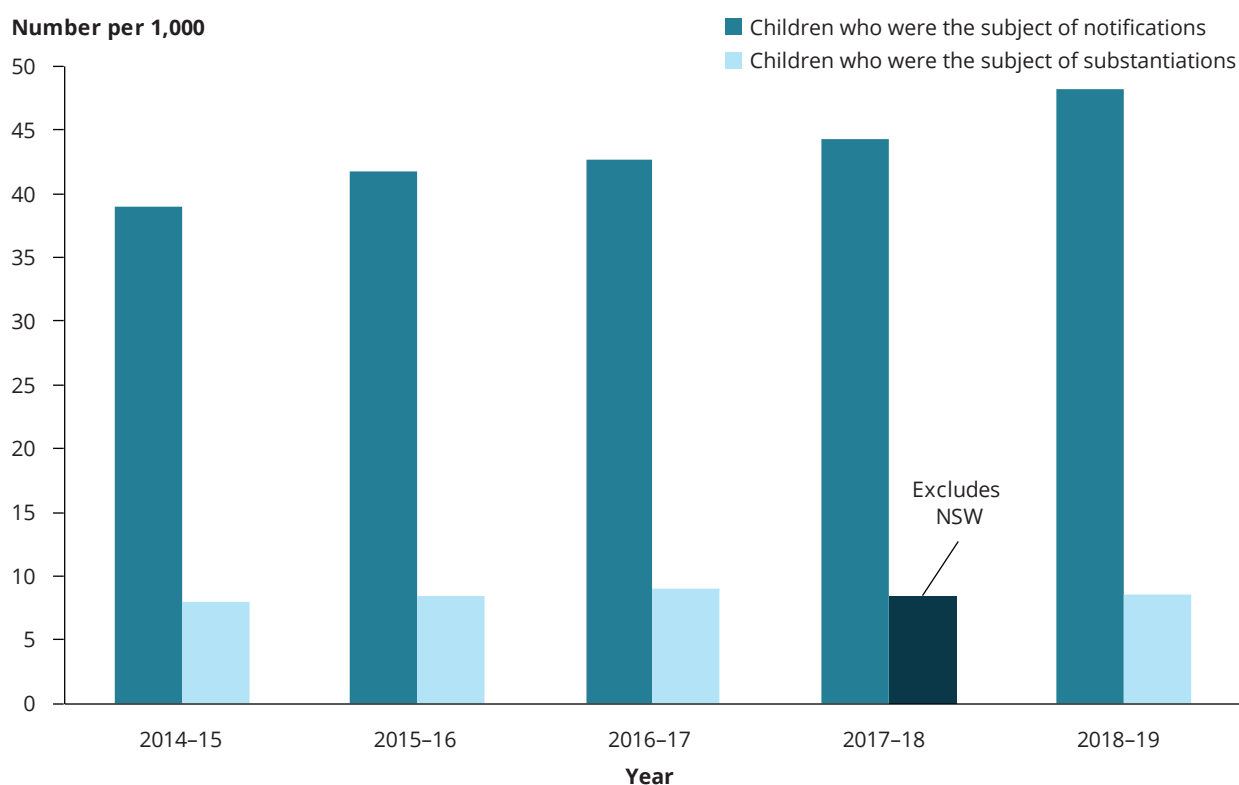
The rate of children who were the subjects of substantiations was 9 per 1,000 children in 2018–19, which was slightly higher than in 2014–15 (8 per 1,000 children).

For state/territory trend data on the number and rate of children who were the subjects of substantiations between 2014–15 and 2018–19, see Table A1.

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 the number of children who were the subject of them.

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–G (online) <[www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/related-material](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/related-material)>.

**Figure 3.11: Children who were the subjects of child protection notifications and substantiations, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (rate)**



### Notes

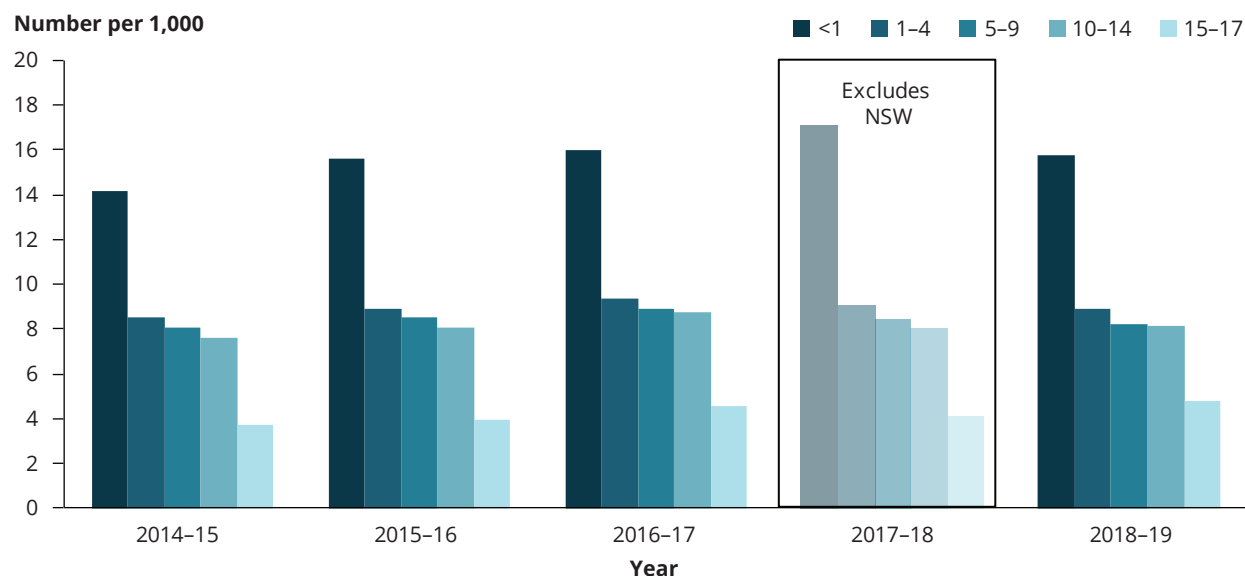
1. Data presented in this figure are not comparable over time due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations and how this has changed over time. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. Substantiation data are unavailable for New South Wales for 2017–18, as the state implemented a new client management system during that year.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) T1.

## Age profile

Since 2014–15, 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 slightly from 14 per 1,000 children in 2014–15 to 16 per 1,000 in 2018–19. The rates for other age groups remained either relatively stable, or rose slightly over the 5-year period (Figure 3.12).

**Figure 3.12: Trends in children who were the subjects of substantiations, by age group, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (rate)**



### Notes

1. Data presented in this figure are not comparable over time due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations and how this has changed over time. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. Substantiation data are unavailable for New South Wales for 2017–18, as the state implemented a new client management system during that year.
3. Unborn children might be covered under child protection legislation, so are included elsewhere in this report. But they are excluded from the 'less than 1 year' age group in this figure.
4. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

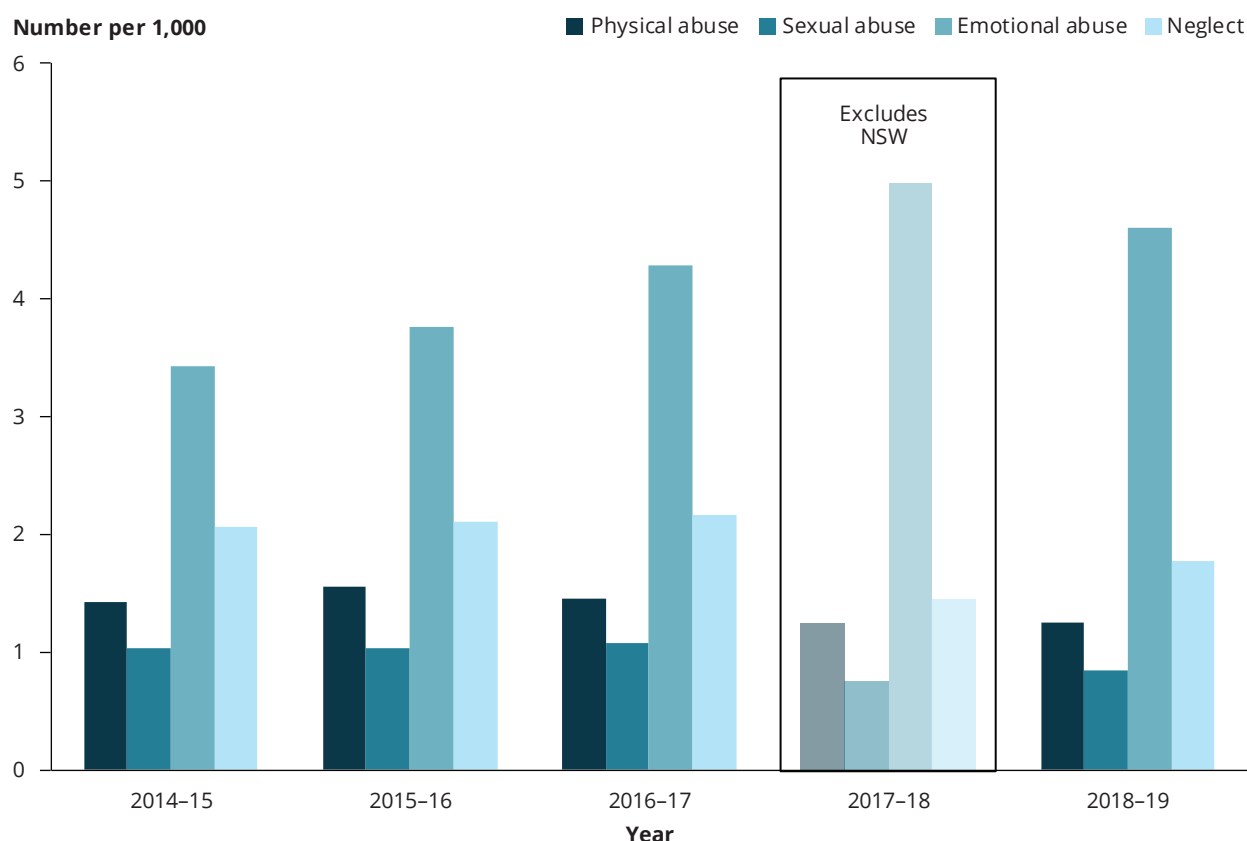
Source: Supplementary data table (online) S3.13.

## Type of abuse and neglect

Between 2014–15 and 2018–19, 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 to 5 per 1,000 children) over this time.

The rates for all other types of abuse remained relatively unchanged over the 5 years to 2018–19 (Figure 3.13).

**Figure 3.13: Trends in children who were the subjects of substantiations, by type of abuse, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (rate)**



### Notes

1. Data presented in this figure are not comparable over time due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations and how this has changed over time. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. Substantiation data are unavailable for New South Wales for 2017–18, as the state implemented a new client management system during that year.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Sources: Supplementary data table (online) S3.14.

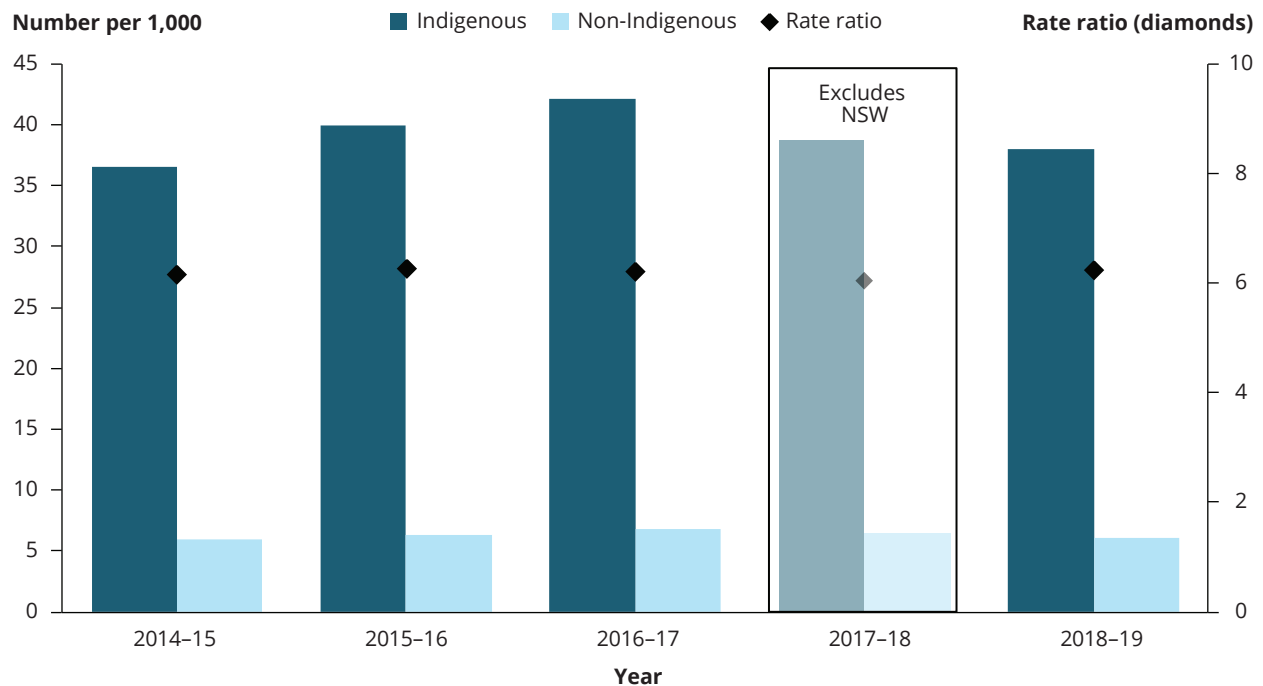


## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

The substantiation rates for Indigenous children rose from 37 per 1,000 Indigenous children in 2014–15 to 42 per 1,000 Indigenous children in 2016–17. Since then, the rate has fallen to 38 per 1,000 Indigenous children in 2018–19.

The substantiation rates for non-Indigenous children remained relatively stable from 2014–15 to 2018–19, remaining at 6 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children.

**Figure 3.14: Trends in children who were the subjects of substantiations, by Indigenous status, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (rate and rate ratio)**



### Notes

1. Data in this figure are not comparable over time due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations and how this has changed over time. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. Substantiation data are unavailable for New South Wales for 2017–18, as the state implemented a new client management system during that year.
3. Due to data quality issues, Tasmania had a higher proportion of children with unknown Indigenous status in 2018–19. Tasmania has undertaken data remediation work to address this issue and has since re-supplied data for reporting of 2017–18 information. As a result, data presented in this report will not match to previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
4. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) T2.

## 4 Care and protection orders

### Key findings

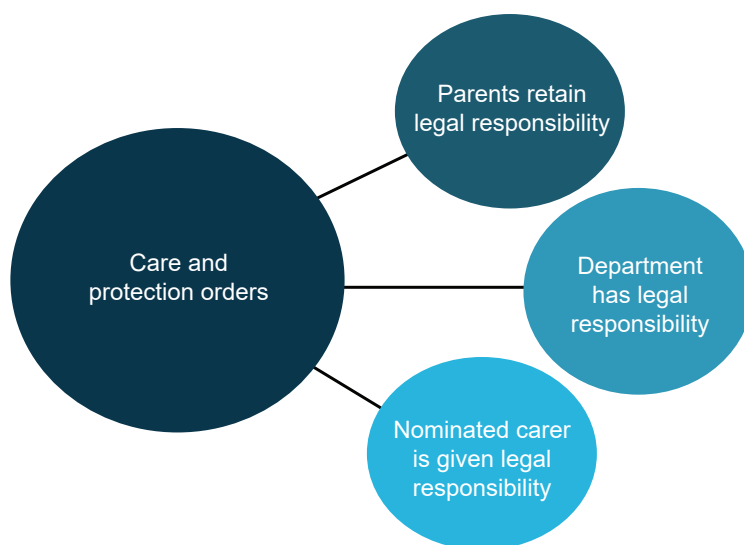
- Around 59,000 children were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2019.
- Of the 59,000 children on care and protection orders, 37% (21,900) were Indigenous.
- Of the 12,900 children admitted to orders in 2018–19, 9,700 (75%) were admitted for the first time.
- 11,500 children were discharged from care and protection orders in 2018–19.

### What is a care and protection order?

Care and protection orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments partial responsibility for a child's welfare (see Table 4.1 for further information). Children are placed on care and protection orders if they are at a serious risk of harm or there are no other care options.

Figure 4.1 outlines the 3 main categories of legal responsibility conferred by care and protection orders.

**Figure 4.1: Legal responsibility conferred by care and protection orders**



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.

A substantiated notification of abuse or neglect does not guarantee that a child will be placed on a care and protection order. If the child's parents are prepared to, or have made changes to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing at home, then the department may decide an order is unnecessary and either refer the family to support services, put a safety plan in place, or determine that no further action is needed.

Nationally, 27% of children who were the subjects of substantiations in 2017–18 were subsequently placed on a care and protection order within 12 months (Supplementary table S4.2).

**Table 4.1: Types of care and protection orders**

Order type	Who has legal responsibility for the child?	When is this type of order used?	Who has day to day responsibility for care of the child?	Duration
Guardianship order	State or territory child protection department or non-government agency	When a child is in an unsafe environment and at risk of further harm	Nominated carer	Short-term and long-term
Custody order	Child's parents retain legal guardianship when child is in the custody of a state or territory child protection department or non-government agency	When a child is in an unsafe environment and at risk of further harm	Child protection department or non-government agency	Short-term and long-term
Third-party parental responsibility order	Nominated individual approved by the courts	Parents are not providing care and a stable or permanent placement is made	Nominated carer	Short-term and long-term
Supervisory order	Child's parents (under supervision and/or guidance of child protection department)	When parents require support or guidance to provide suitable care to their child	Parents (under supervision and/or guidance of child protection department)	Short-term and long-term
Interim and temporary order	Child's parents or state or territory child protection department	Temporary care to remove a child from an unsafe environment usually occurs while another type of order is being sought	Child's parents or state or territory child protection department	Short-term
Administrative arrangement	State or territory child protection department or non-government agency	Emergency situations where children require immediate removal from an unsafe environment	Child protection department or a nominated carer	Short-term and long-term
Immigration order	Minister for Immigration or nominated carer	When children enter Australia without a relative to care for them	Child protection department or a nominated carer	Short-term

Box 4.1 outlines data limitations for reporting on children on care and protection orders.

#### **Box 4.1: Data limitations for children on care and protection orders**

A number of considerations with data related to children on care and protection orders need to be taken into account; some notable issues include:

- Some outputs are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations, and living arrangements.
- New South Wales order data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders and currently do not strictly conform to the national counting rules for admissions to care and protection orders.
- Data for Tasmania may not be comparable year to year due to issues with the recording of order status.

## How many children were on care and protection orders?

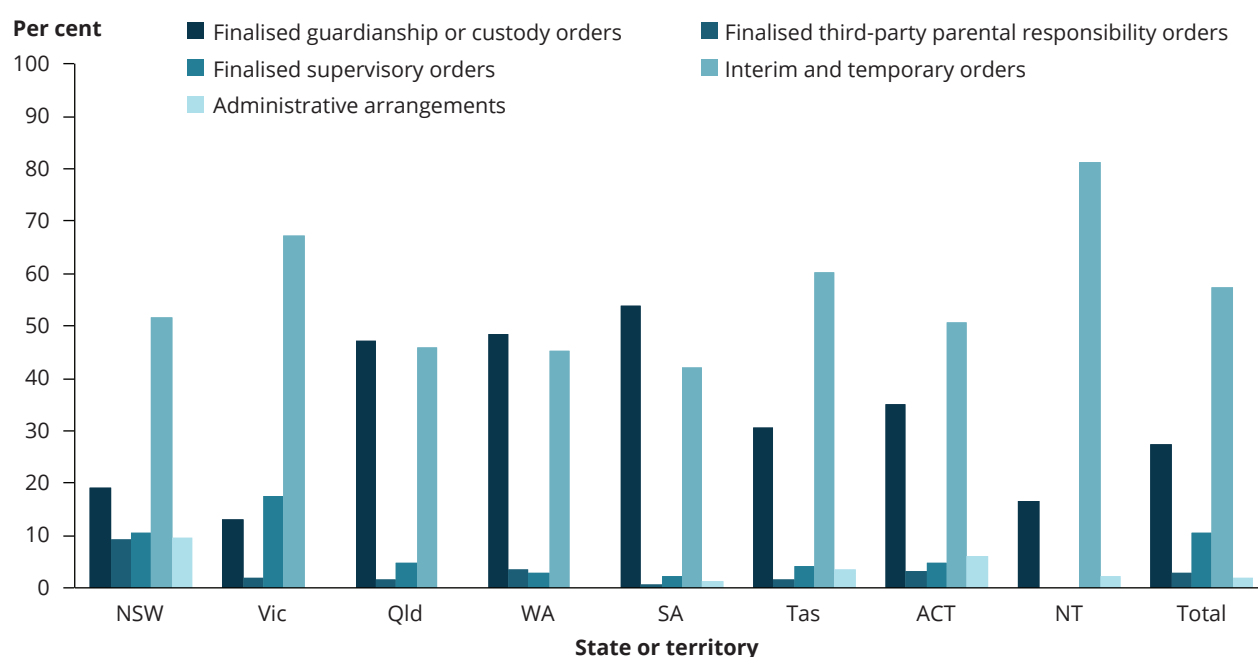
A child may receive multiple care and protection orders over the course of a single year. Each order is counted separately, but a child is counted for only 1 admission/discharge during the year. As a result, the counts of orders issued are much higher than the counts of children admitted to care and protection orders.

### Care and protection orders issued

About 48,500 care and protection orders were issued in 2018–19. Of these, most were interim and temporary orders (57%, or 27,800) or finalised guardianship and custody orders (28% or 13,400).

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 4.2). The relatively high percentage of interim and temporary orders is likely to be due to these orders being in place while children are the subjects of another order application going through the courts.

**Figure 4.2: Care and protection orders issued, by type of order and state or territory, 2018–19 (per cent)**



**Notes**

1. Administrative arrangements are not applicable to Victoria and Queensland.
2. Data for Tasmania may not be comparable year to year due to issues with the recording of order status.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S4.1.

## Children admitted to and discharged from orders

In 2018–19, about 12,900 children were admitted to care and protection orders, three-quarters (75%) of whom were admitted for the first time (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2: Children admitted to, and discharged from, care and protection orders, by state or territory, 2018–19 (number)**

	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(c)</sup>	ACT	NT	Total
Children admitted to orders	2,228	5,506	2,371	1,261	786	438	103	229	<b>12,922</b>
Children admitted for the first time	1,774	3,993	1,788	904	698	270	95	161	<b>9,683</b>
<i>Percentage of all admissions</i>	<i>79.6</i>	<i>72.5</i>	<i>75.4</i>	<i>71.7</i>	<i>88.8</i>	<i>61.6</i>	<i>92.2</i>	<i>70.3</i>	<b>74.9</b>
Children discharged from orders	2,380	4,713	2,150	980	551	353	128	237	<b>11,492</b>

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

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

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

### Notes

1. Data might include children who were discharged on their 18th birthday.
2. For details on methodology used to count admissions and discharges from care and protection orders, see Appendix B (online).

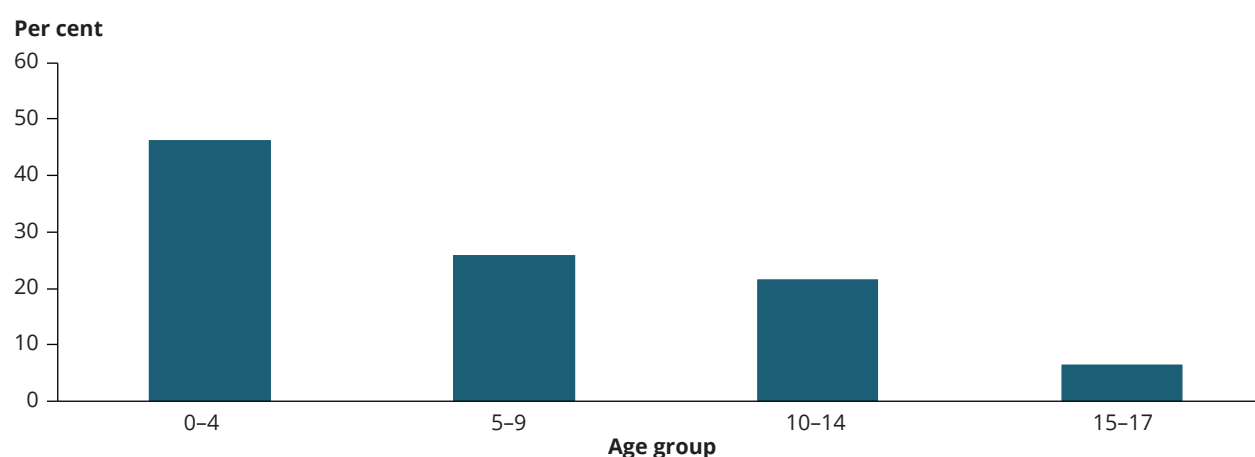
Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

Almost half (46%) of children admitted to orders in 2018–19 were aged under 5 (Figure 4.3).

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 fewer children admitted to orders as age increased.

**Figure 4.3: Children admitted to care and protection orders, by age group, 2018–19 (per cent)**



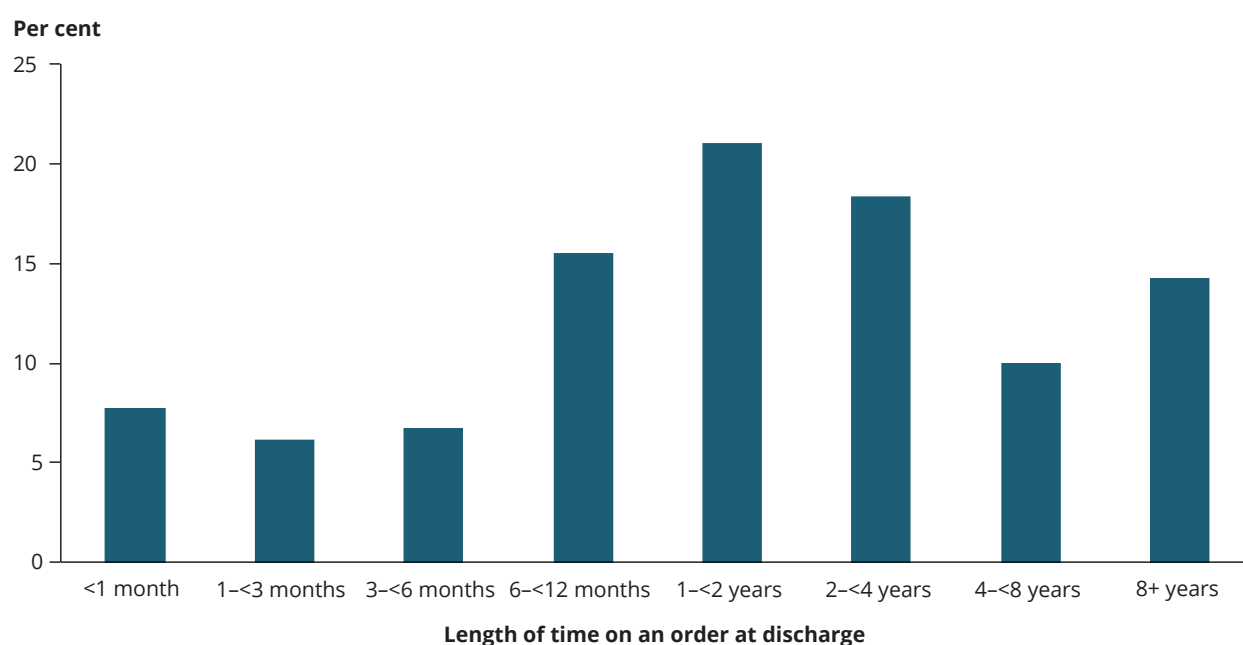
Source: Supplementary data table (online) S4.3.

## Length of time on an order at discharge

Of the approximately 11,500 children discharged from care and protection orders in 2018–19:

- 8% were continuously on an order for less than 1 month
- 6% were continuously on an order for 1 to 3 months
- 21% were continuously on an order for 1 to 2 years
- 14% were continuously on an order for 8 years or more (Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4: Children discharged from care and protection orders, by length of time on an order, 2018–19 (per cent)**



*Note:* For details on the methodology used to count discharges from care and protection orders, see Appendix B (online).

*Source:* Supplementary data table (online) S4.4.

At the time of discharge, Indigenous children were most likely to have been continuously on an order for 2 to 4 years (21% or 716) and non-Indigenous children (22% or 1,800) were most likely to have been continuously on an order for 1 to 2 years (Supplementary table S4.4).

## What were the characteristics of children on care and protection orders?

Children are counted in the state or territory where their 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 transfer custody or guardianship away from parents.

Nationally, at 30 June 2019, about 59,000 children were on care and protection orders—a rate of 11 per 1,000 children (see Table 4.3 for numbers and rates across jurisdictions).

**Table 4.3: Children on care and protection orders, by state or territory, 30 June 2019 (number and rate)**

	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(b)</sup>	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>	20,740	14,316	10,512	5,875	4,178	1,452	890	1,110	<b>59,073</b>
<b>Number per 1,000</b>	11.7	10.1	8.9	9.7	11.3	12.9	9.4	17.9	<b>10.5</b>

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

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

Note: See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Sources: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

## Type of order

Of the approximately 59,000 children who were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2019, almost two-thirds (62% or 36,700) were on finalised guardianship or custody orders (Figure 4.5).

**Figure 4.5: Children on care and protection orders, by type of order, 30 June 2019 (per cent)**



Source: Supplementary data table (online) S4.10.

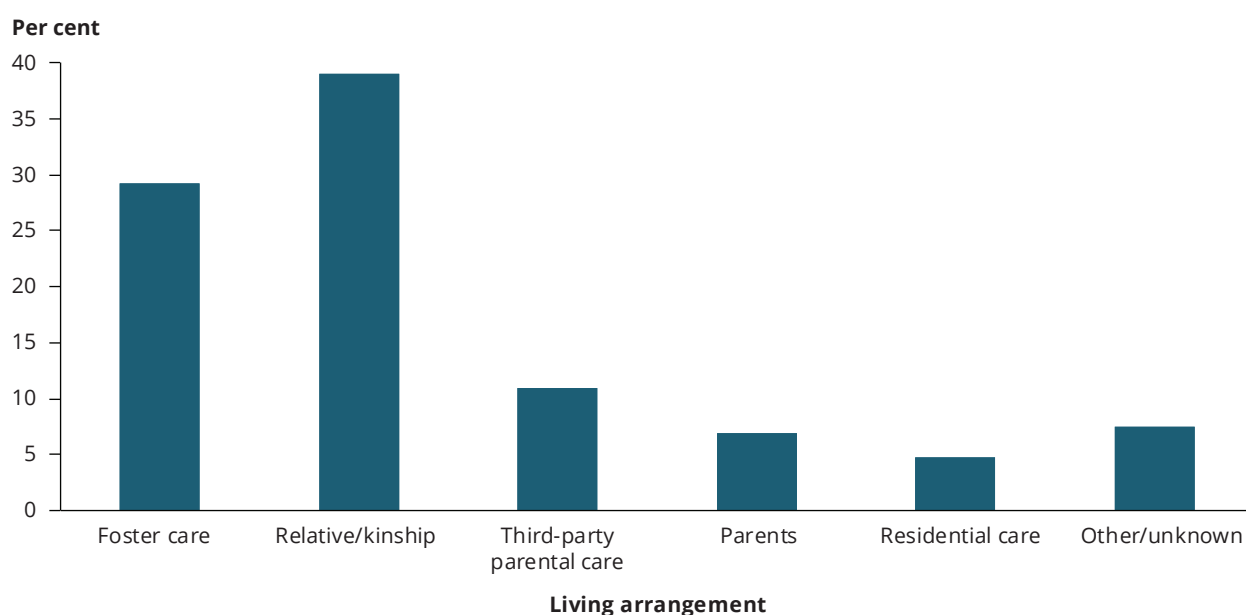
The type of order issued for each child depends upon many factors, such as the child's age; alternative accommodation options available; the severity of harm to child; and/or the likelihood of reuniting the child with their family.

## Living arrangement

At 30 June 2019, the majority (68%) of children on care and protection orders lived with relative/kinship carers (39%) or in foster care (29%).

Smaller percentages of children were living in third-party parental care arrangements (11%), with their parents (7%), or in residential care (5%) (Figure 4.6).

**Figure 4.6: Children on care and protection orders, by living arrangements, 30 June 2019 (per cent)**



Source: Supplementary data table (online) S4.5.

The living arrangements of children on orders generally reflected their age. Across Australia, 96% of children on orders who were living independently were aged 15–17, and 69% of children on orders who were under 5 were living in family care, third-party parental care, or home-based care (Supplementary table S4.6).

## Age and sex

Of the approximately 59,000 children on orders at 30 June 2019:

- 21% were aged under 5 (compared with 46% of children admitted to orders)
- 62% were aged 5–14
- 17% were aged 15–17 (Supplementary table S4.7)
- 51% were boys (Supplementary table S4.8).

The age distribution of all children on orders at 30 June 2019 was older than that for children admitted to orders during 2018–2019. This reflects that the number of children on orders at 30 June includes children who were admitted during previous years and remained on an order in 2019 (Supplementary tables S4.3 and S4.7).

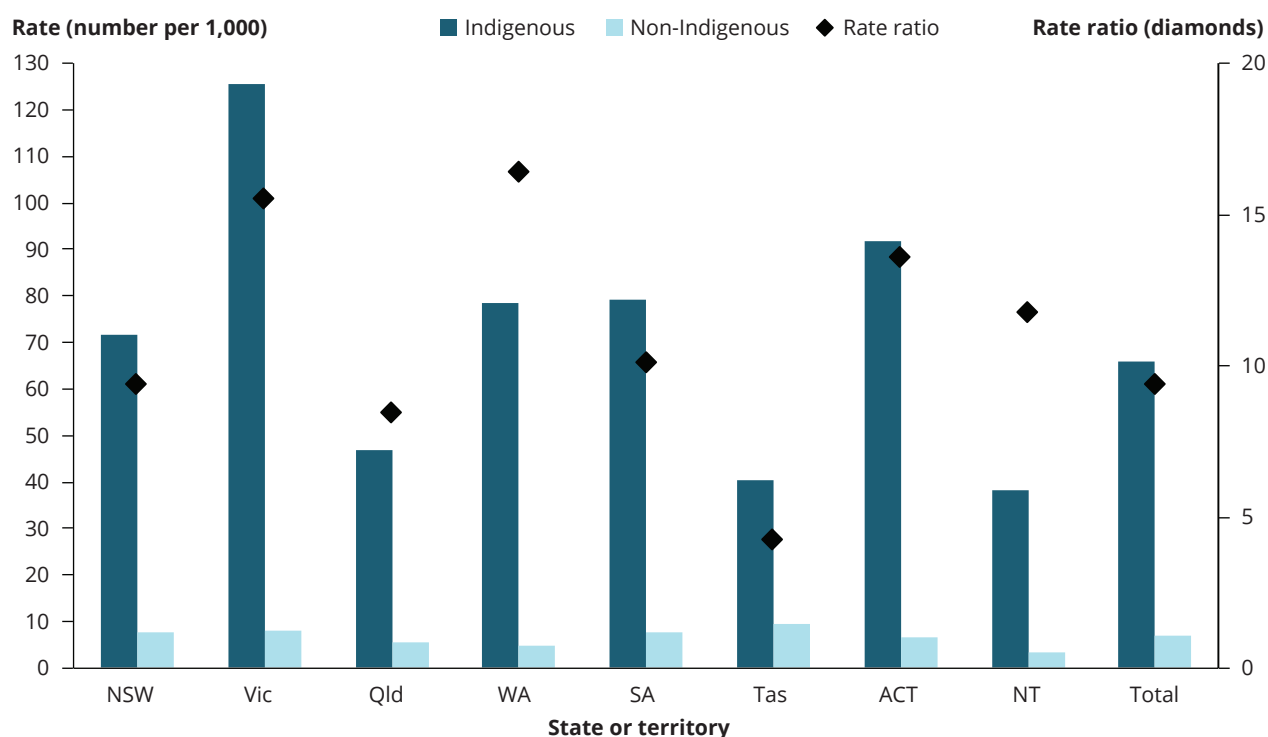


## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

At 30 June 2019, 37% (21,900) of children on care and protection orders were Indigenous. Of these children, 70% (15,300) were on guardianship or custody orders (Supplementary table S4.10).

The rate of Indigenous children on orders was 66 per 1,000 Indigenous children, 9 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (7 per 1,000). The rate of Indigenous children on orders was higher than that for non-Indigenous children across all jurisdictions, with rate ratios varying across jurisdictions (Figure 4.7).

**Figure 4.7: Children on care and protection orders, by Indigenous status and state or territory, 30 June 2019 (rate and rate ratio)**



### Notes

1. Data for Tasmania may not be comparable year to year due to issues with the recording of order status.
2. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S4.9.

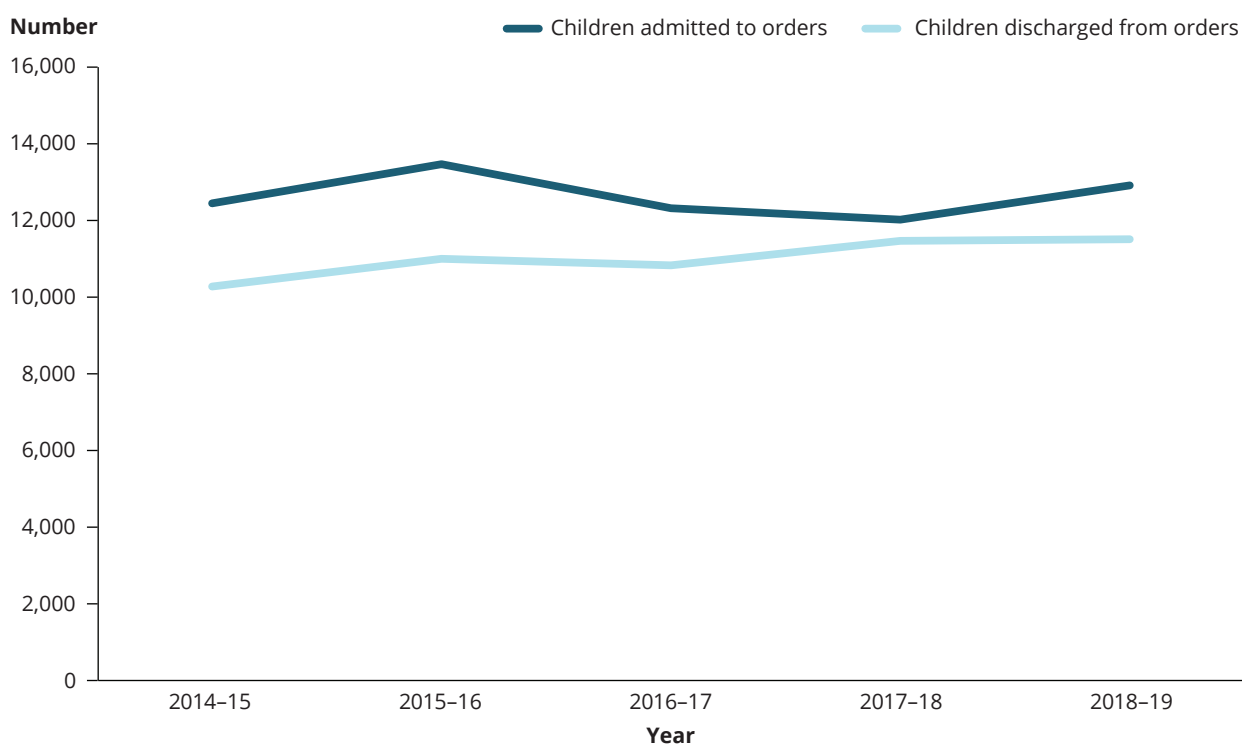
## Has the use of care and protection orders changed over time?

### Trends in children admitted to, and discharged from, orders

The number of children admitted to care and protection orders fluctuates each year, but overall has remained relatively stable between 2014–15 and 2018–19 (12,400 to 12,900) (Figure 4.8).

The number of children discharged from orders has increased 12% (from 10,300 in 2014–15 to 11,500 in 2018–19). This continues the recent trend of increasing numbers of children being discharged from orders (Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.8: Trends in children admitted to, and discharged from, care and protection orders, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (number)**



*Note:* For details on the methodology used to count admissions and discharges from care and protection orders, see Appendix B (online).

*Sources:* Supplementary data tables (online) S4.11 and S4.12.

## Trends in children on care and protection orders

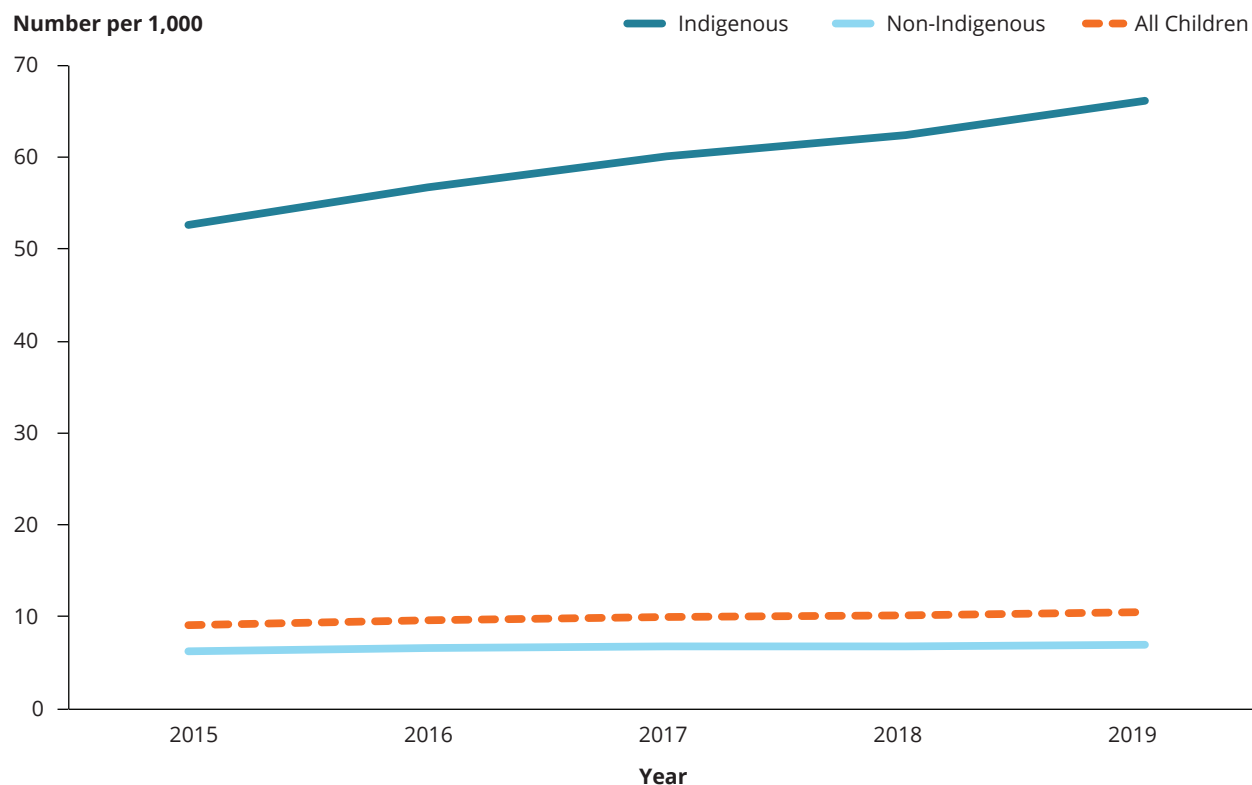
From 30 June 2015 to 30 June 2019, the rate of children aged 0–17 on care and protection orders rose from 9 to 11 per 1,000 children (Table A1).

Over the 5-year period, the number of Indigenous children on care and protection orders rose steadily, from 16,900 on 30 June 2015 to 21,900 on 30 June 2019, with rates rising from 53 to 66 per 1,000 Indigenous children.

While the number of non-Indigenous children on care and protection orders rose from 31,700 to 37,100 in the same period, the rate remained relatively stable, rising only slightly from 6 to 7 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children (Figure 4.9).

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 4.9: Trends in children on care and protection orders, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2015 to 30 June 2019 (rate)**



### Notes

1. Due to data quality issues, Tasmania had a higher proportion of children with unknown Indigenous status in 2017–18. Tasmania has undertaken data remediation work to address this issue and has since re-supplied data for reporting of 2017–18 information. As a result, data presented in this report will not match to previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
2. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates and rate ratios.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) T2.

## 5 Out-of-home care

### Key point

A nationally consistent definition for out-of-home care has been implemented in 2018-19. Data based on this definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

### Key findings

- There were about 44,900 children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019.
- About 12,200 children were admitted to out-of-home care in 2018-19.
- About 10,700 children were discharged from out-of-home care in 2018-19.
- Around 30,300 children had been in out-of-home care for 2 years or more at 30 June 2019.
- About 1 in 18 (18,000) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019, more than 10 times the rate for non-Indigenous children.
- There were a further 9,200 children on third-party parental responsibility orders who were not considered to be in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019.

Departments responsible for child protection provide a range of services to support children and young people in the child protection system so that they may have stable long-term care arrangements. This includes the provision of out-of-home care placements (see Box 5.1).

Some children are placed in out-of-home care because they are the subject of a substantiation and need a more protective environment. Children may also be placed in out-of-home care when parents are incapable of providing adequate care, when alternative accommodation is needed during times of conflict, or when parents/carers need respite.

### What is the national definition for out-of-home care?

A nationally consistent definition for out-of-home care was agreed upon in 2019 and is presented in Box 5.1. Before implementing the national definition in this report, out-of-home care reporting has been affected by data comparability issues (see Box 5.2).

### Box 5.1: Out-of-home care

**Out-of-home care** is overnight care for children aged under 18 who are unable to live with their families due to child safety concerns. This includes placements approved by the department responsible for child protection for which there is ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer).

Out-of-home care includes legal (court-ordered) and voluntary placements, as well as placements made for the purpose of providing respite for parents and/or carers.

Out-of-home care excludes:

- placements for children on third-party parental responsibility orders (see Table 4.1 for more information order types)
- placements for children on immigration orders
- supported placements for children aged 18 or over
- pre-adoptive placements and placements for children whose adoptive parents receive ongoing funding due to the support needs of the child
- placements to which a child enters and exits on the same day
- placements solely funded by disability services, psychiatric services, specialist homelessness services, juvenile justice facilities, or overnight child care services
- cases in which a child self-places without approval by the department.

## How has the scope of out-of-home care changed?

As of 2019, a nationally consistent definition for out-of-home care has been implemented in all jurisdictions (see Box 5.2) to focus on children for whom there is ongoing case management to achieve a permanent care arrangement, and/or ensure stability of placement in out-of-home care, if required. This group of children is the focus of permanency planning reforms which aim to ensure children and young people experience:

- timely and informed decision-making on permanency
- permanent, safe and stable care
- lifelong relationships, belonging, identity and connection
- better life outcomes.

The change in reporting requires separate measurement of children for whom case management focuses on achieving a permanent care arrangement, which is the focus of this chapter. Chapter 6, a new addition to the *Child protection Australia* report, provides information on children who exited, or 'transferred from', out-of-home care to permanent care arrangements and measures state and territory performance in the first 2 permanency domains listed above.

### **Box 5.2: Revised scope of out-of-home care reporting**

The scope of 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 in previous years were 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.

Following extensive jurisdictional consultation, national reporting based on a consistent national definition of out-of-home care was agreed upon in 2019; it excludes children on third-party parental responsibility orders, children on immigration orders, young people aged 18 and over, and children in pre-adoptive placements from counts of children in out-of-home care.

The most significant difference in reporting resulting from the change in scope relates to children on third-party parental responsibility orders. These children are no longer considered in-scope nationally for out-of-home care. At 30 June 2019, over 20% of children on care and protection orders were on third-party parental responsibility orders, whereas less than 1% of children were on immigration orders (Supplementary table S4.10).

Third-party parental responsibility orders vary across jurisdictions. Despite this:

- a) in most instances, third-party parental responsibility orders transfer guardianship away from the state and to a known carer
- b) in nearly all cases, third-party parental carers are offered the same carer payments as long-term guardians
- c) there is generally no ongoing case management for children on third-party parental responsibility orders, except in South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, and for some children in New South Wales and Queensland:
  - i) In New South Wales, there are 2 types of third-party parental responsibility orders, which differ in 2 primary dimensions: whether there is ongoing case management and whether the department is working towards a permanency outcome. Where both of these factors are present, the children are still regarded as being in out-of-home care. Where neither applies, the children are regarded as not in out-of-home care, in line with the national definition.
  - ii) In Queensland, some children on third-party parental responsibility orders are provided with case management (for children subject to long-term orders granting guardianship to other suitable persons only). Long-term guardianship or custody orders to the state, however, feature ongoing case management.

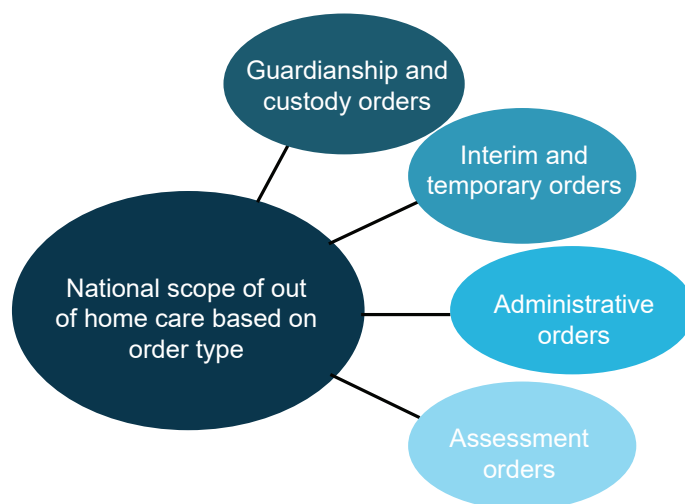
The revised scope is consistent with permanency reforms that consider children in third-party parental responsibility arrangements as having exited from out-of-home care into a permanent and stable arrangement.

Data based on the nationally consistent definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

The impact of implementing the national out-of-home care definition varies by jurisdiction. For information on how out-of-home care numbers are affected see 'Appendix B: Technical notes' (online).

Children in out-of-home care are on care and protection orders that confer most or all legal responsibility for their welfare to a child protection department (Figure 5.1). These children receive ongoing case management with a view to achieving a permanent placement or reunification where appropriate.

**Figure 5.1: Children in scope for the nationally consistent definition of out-of-home care**



Box 5.3 outlines data considerations for reporting on children in out-of-home care.

**Box 5.3: Data notes for children in out-of-home care**

A number of considerations with data related to children in out-of-home care need to be taken into account; some notable issues are listed below:

- From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on the nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
- Prior to 2018–19, differences in definitions between jurisdictions mean that trend data presented in this chapter must be interpreted with caution (see page 60 and ‘Appendix B: Technical notes’ online for more information).

## How many children were in out-of-home care?

Nationally, approximately 44,900 children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019—a rate of 8 per 1,000 children (see Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1. Children in out-of-home care, state or territory, 30 June 2019 (number and rate)**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(a)</sup>	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>	16,884	8,490	8,125	4,754	3,797	1,104	696	1,056	<b>44,906</b>
<b>Number per 1,000</b>	9.5	6.0	6.9	7.9	10.3	9.8	7.3	17.0	<b>8.0</b>

(a) Tasmanian data 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. 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.

### Notes

1. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
2. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Sources: Table A1.

## Children admitted to and discharged from out-of-home care

In 2018–19, nationally:

- about 12,200 children were admitted to out-of-home care—a rate of 2 per 1,000 children (Supplementary table S5.1)
- about 10,700 children were discharged from out-of-home care—a rate of 2 per 1,000 children (Supplementary table S5.2).

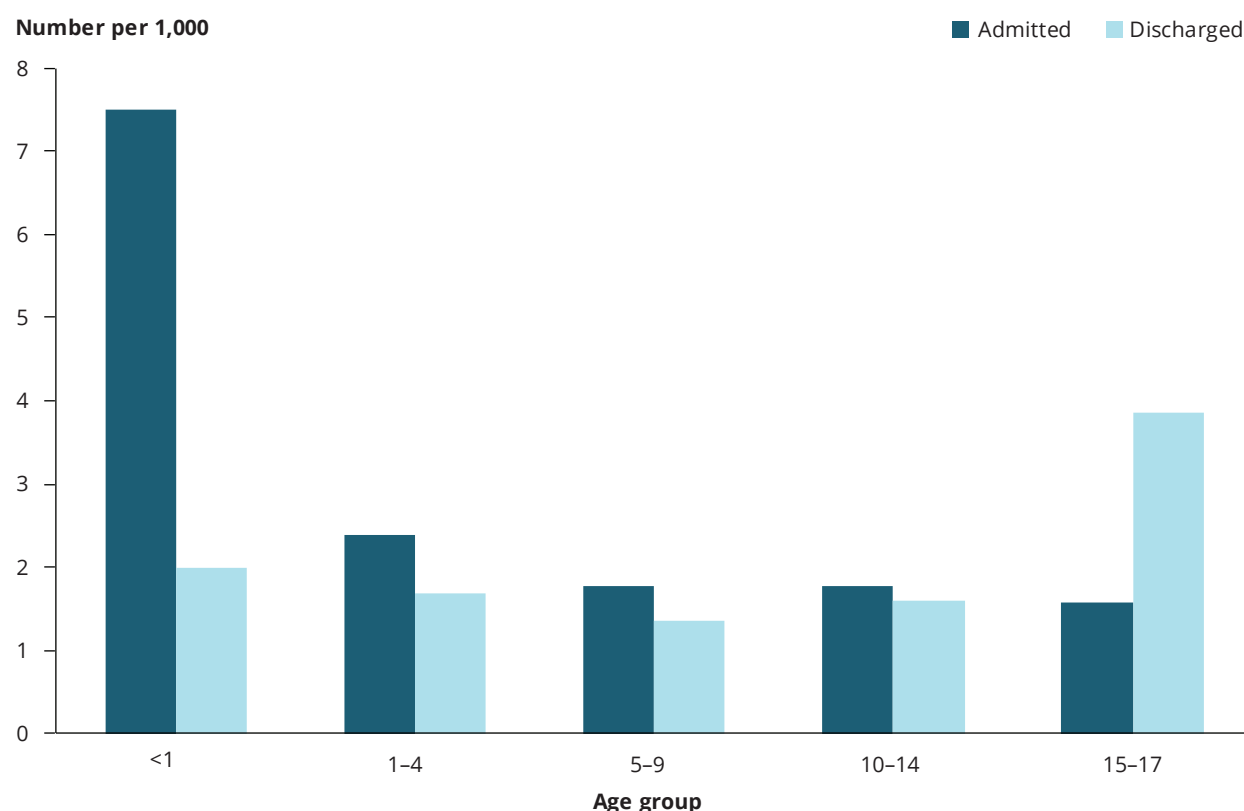
### Age

In 2018–19, the rates of admission to out-of-home care were highest for the youngest children, at 7 per 1,000 for those aged under 1. Rates of admission to out-of-home care fell as age increased, with the lowest rate being for children aged 15–17 (2 per 1,000 children) (Figure 5.2).

Rates of discharges from out-of-home care were highest for children aged 15–17, at 4 per 1,000 children, but were similar across other age groups (from 1 per 1,000 for children aged 5–9, to 2 per 1,000 for children aged less than 1) (Figure 5.2).



**Figure 5.2: Children admitted to, and discharged from, out-of-home care, by age group, 2018–19 (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. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Source: Supplementary data tables (online) S5.1 and S5.2.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

In 2018–19, about 4,300 Indigenous children were admitted to out-of-home care at a rate of 13 per 1,000 Indigenous children, nearly 9 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (1.5 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children). Similar differences in rates of admission to out-of-home care for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children were evident across all age groups (Supplementary table S5.1).

Around 3,600 Indigenous children were discharged from out-of-home care. The rate of children discharged from out-of-home care during 2018–19 was also higher for Indigenous children (11 per 1,000 children) than for non-Indigenous children (1 per 1,000 children).

In 2018–19, Indigenous children aged under 1 were 7 times as likely as non-Indigenous children of the same age to be discharged from out-of-home care, and for those aged 10–14 the figure was 9 times as likely (Supplementary table S5.2).

## What types of placements were children in?

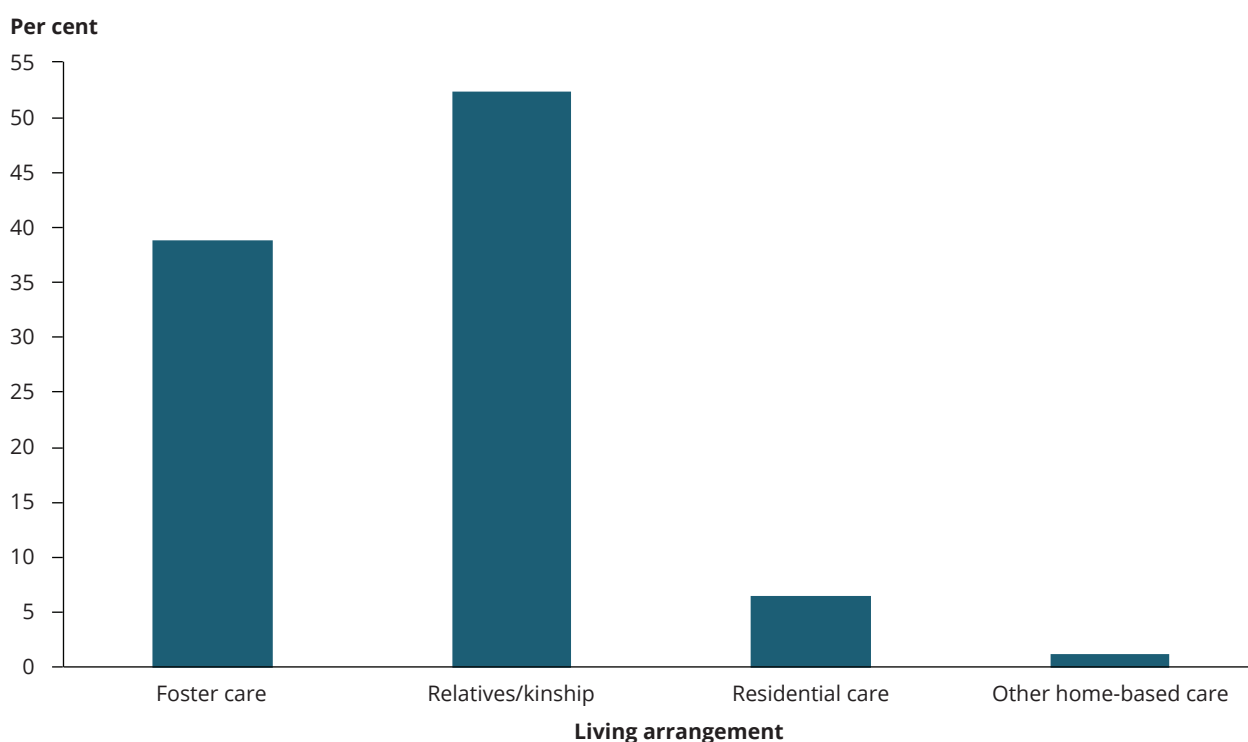
The vast majority of children (92% of around 44,900) in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019 were in home-based care. Of those in out-of-home care:

- 52% were in relative/kinship care
- 39% were in foster care
- 1% were in other types of home-based care (Supplementary table S5.3).

Data on the relationship of relative/kin carers were available for only 3 jurisdictions, representing 16% of children placed with relative/kin carers at 30 June 2019. For jurisdictions with available data, the most common placement was with grandparents (44%), followed by an aunt/uncle (22%). Only 3% were placed in a non-familial relationship (Supplementary table S5.4).

Nationally, about 6% of children in out-of-home care were living in residential care (Figure 5.3). Residential care is used mainly 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 5.3: Children in out-of-home care, by living arrangements, 30 June 2019 (per cent)**



### Notes

1. Variation across jurisdictions in policy/practice for recording living arrangement types affects these results (see Supplementary table S5.3 for more information).
2. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.3.

Table 5.2 provides further information on the types of placements considered in-scope for the national definition of out-of-home care.

**Table 5.2: Types of out-of-home care placements**

Type of out-of-home care	Where is the child living?	Who is caring for the child?
Residential care	In a residential building with paid staff.	Staff employed to provide care to children placed in the residence.
Family group homes	A home provided by a department or agency.	Live-in carers who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for providing care to the child.
Home-based care	The home of a carer who is reimbursed for care expenses. This includes relative/kinship care, foster care and other home-based out-of-home care.	A nominated and approved carer such as a relative, family friend or non-familial foster carer.
Independent living	A private board or lead tenant household.	The child is responsible for their own care, with the department retaining oversight of their welfare.
Other	The child may have another living arrangement, such as in a disability service, boarding school, hospital or hotel/motel.	These placements may have rostered or paid staff but are generally not home-like environments.

## What were the characteristics of children in out-of-home care?

### Age and sex

Almost one-third (32%) of children in out-of-home care were aged 10–14, and a similar percentage were aged 5–9 (30%) (Supplementary table S5.5). Just over half (52%) of all children in out-of-home care were boys (Supplementary table S5.6).

Children in residential care were older than children in home-based care—87% of children in residential care or family group homes were aged 10 or over. The corresponding percentage of children aged 10 and over in home-based care was 44% (Supplementary table S5.7).

Less than 2% of children in residential care or family group homes were aged under 5, compared with 25% of children in home-based care.

### Disability

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). As disability is a multidimensional and complex concept, differences may exist across jurisdictions in how disability is defined. There are also differences in how information about disability is captured in jurisdictional processes and client information systems.

In 2018–19, data on disability status was available for 58% of children in out-of-home care at 30 June. The available data show that about 12% of children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019 were reported as having a disability (Supplementary table S5.8).

## Remoteness area

At 30 June 2019, more than half (54%) of the children in out-of-home care lived in *Major cities*, and 42% lived in *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas (based on postcode of living arrangement) (Supplementary table S5.9a).

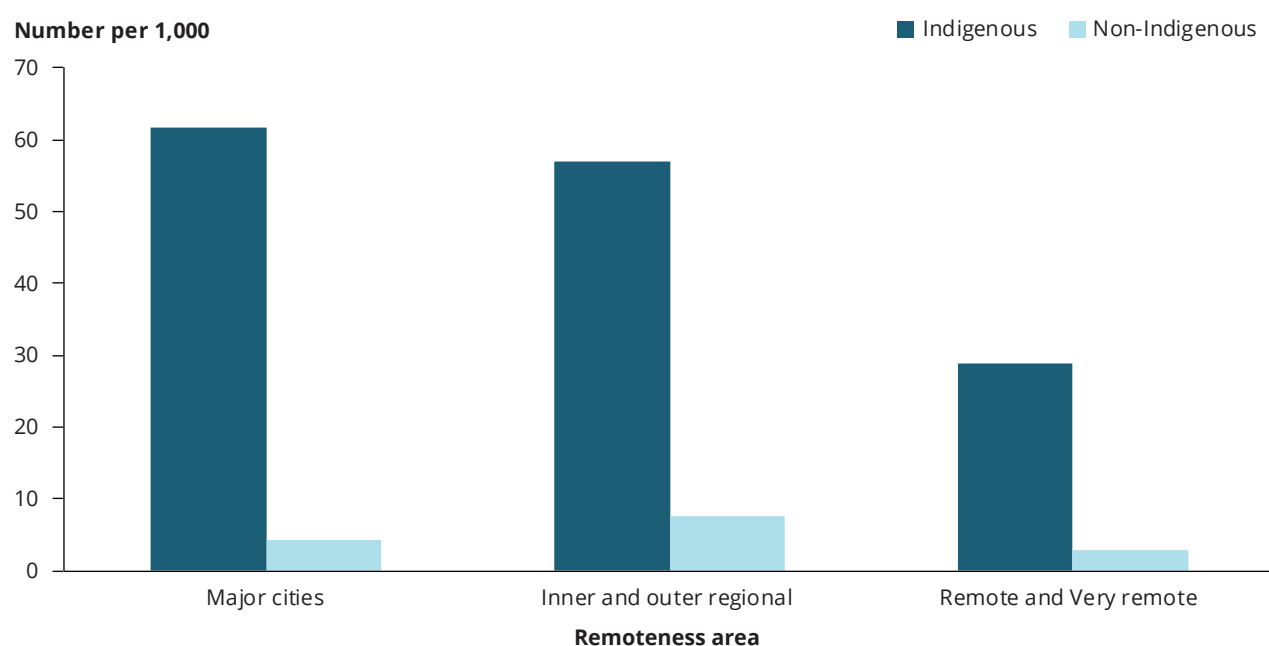
The rates for children in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas were twice that of those in *Major cities* for children living in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019 (Supplementary table S5.9c).

The rates of Indigenous children in out-of-home care were much higher across all remoteness areas than the rates for non-Indigenous children (Figure 5.4).

Indigenous children living in *Major cities* were 14 times as likely as non-Indigenous children in *Major cities* to be in out-of-home care at 30 June—62 per 1,000 Indigenous children compared with 4 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children (Supplementary table S5.9b).

Indigenous children living in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas were 10 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care.

**Figure 5.4: Children in out-of-home care, by remoteness area and Indigenous status, 30 June 2019 (rate)**



### Notes

1. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
2. Aggregated categories are reported in this table for 'Inner and Outer regional' and 'Remote and Very remote' due to availability of population data used as the denominator for calculating rates.
3. The Remoteness Areas divide Australia into broad geographic regions that share common characteristics of remoteness for statistical purposes. For more information, see Appendix B (online) or ABS 2018a.
4. Some remoteness areas are not found in all states and territories.
5. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

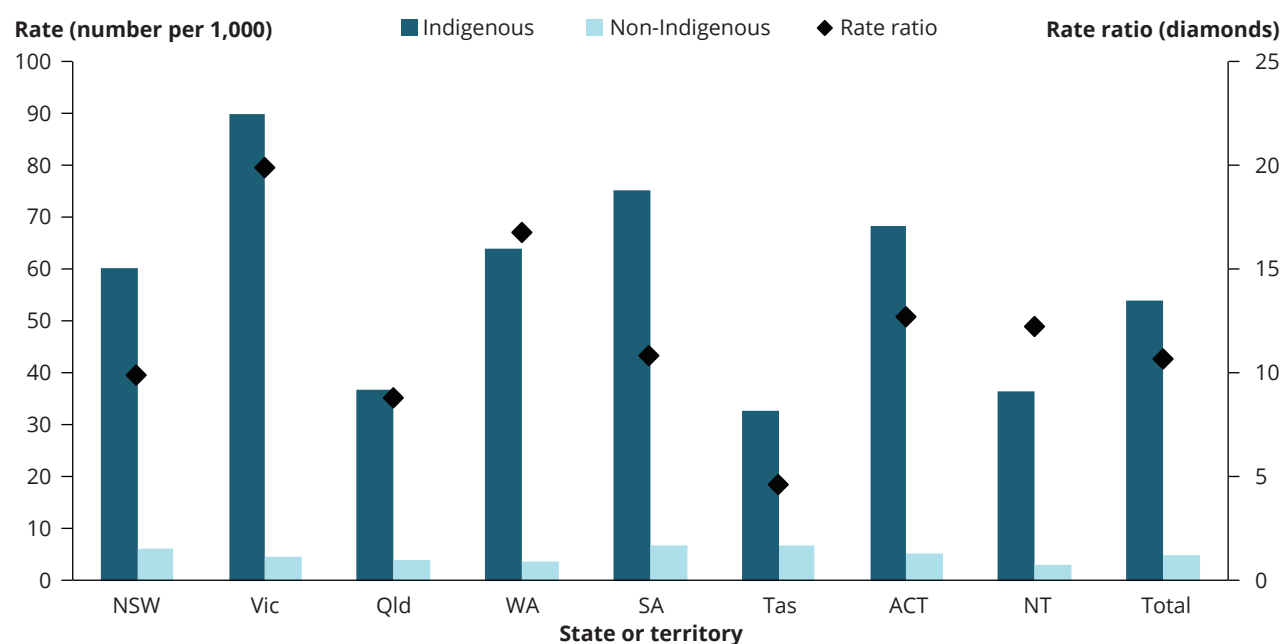
Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.9b.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

At 30 June 2019, about 18,000 Indigenous children were in out-of-home care—a rate of 54 per 1,000 Indigenous children, which was nearly 11 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (Figure 5.5). This difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children was evident across all age groups (Supplementary table S5.11).

Rates for Indigenous children in out-of-home care varied by age groups. Indigenous children aged 10–14 had the highest rate of out-of-home care (62 per 1,000 Indigenous children), while those aged under 1 had the lowest rate (27 per 1,000) (Supplementary table S5.11).

**Figure 5.5: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status, state or territory, 30 June 2019 (rate and rate ratio)**



### Notes

1. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
2. Tasmanian data 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. 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.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the methodology used to calculate rate and rate ratios.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.10.

Box 5.6 describes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, which has been adopted by all jurisdictions in legislation and policy.

The impact of the principle is reflected in the relatively high proportion of Indigenous children who were placed either with Indigenous caregivers or with relatives in many jurisdictions (Figure 5.6).

In 2018–19, 64% of Indigenous children were placed with relatives/kin, other Indigenous caregivers, or in Indigenous residential care, with some variation across states and territories. This percentage is similar to that reported in previous years.

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

The principle has the following order of preference for the placement of Indigenous children:

- with the child's extended family and kinship networks
- within the child's Indigenous community
- with other Indigenous 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 Indigenous 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 monitoring of this.

**Figure 5.6: Indigenous children in out-of-home care, by relationship of carer, state or territory, 30 June 2019 (per cent)**



**Notes**

1. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
2. Tasmanian data 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. 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.
3. In Tasmania, the high number of carers whose Indigenous status is unknown may affect the identification of children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.
4. 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.
5. Family group homes and residential care are reported under 'Other caregiver'.
6. Children for whom relationship of carer and/or their Indigenous status were unknown are included in 'Placed with other non-Indigenous caregivers or in non-Indigenous residential care'.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.12.

## Care and protection order status

At 30 June 2019, nationally, of children in out-of-home care:

- 95% were also on care and protection orders
- 5% were not on an order (Supplementary table S5.13).

## Length of time continuously in care

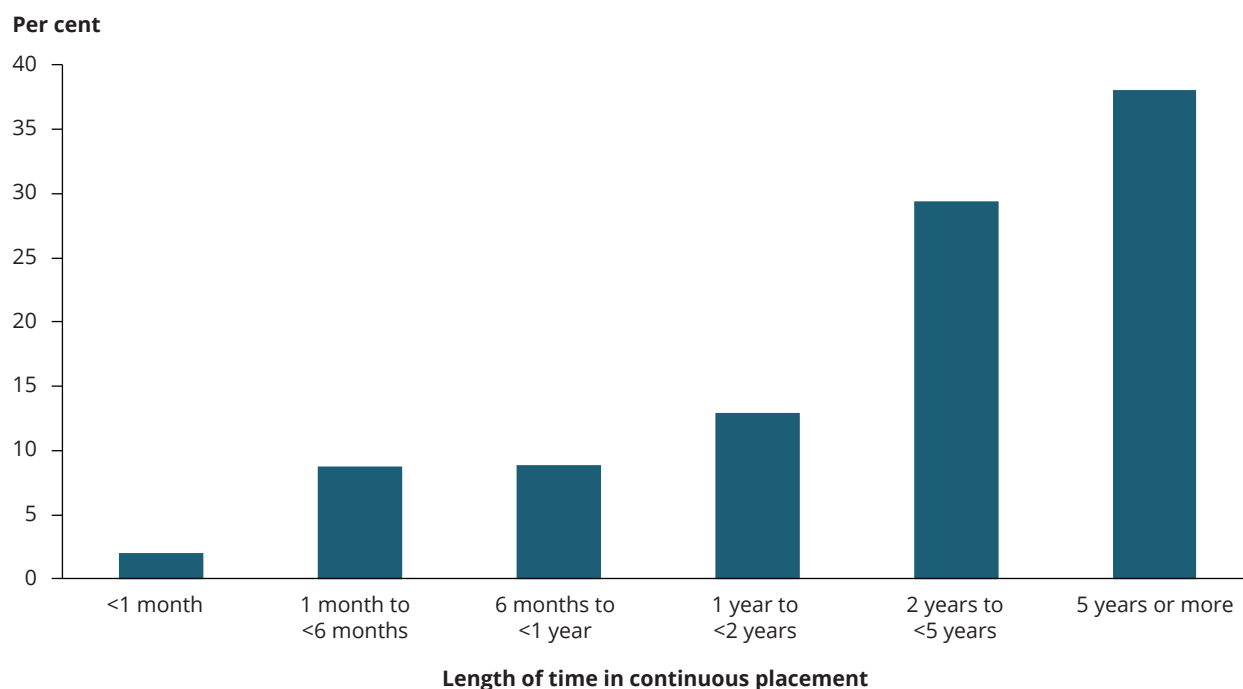
Of approximately 44,900 children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019, most (80%) had been continuously in out-of-home care for 1 year or more (Supplementary table S5.14). This included:

- 29% who had been in out-of-home care for 2–5 years
- 38% who had been in out-of-home care for 5 years or more (Figure 5.7).

About 20% of children had been in out-of-home care for less than 1 year.

The proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in out-of-home care were similar, both for those spending 1 year or more continuously in care (82% and 79%, respectively), and for those spending less than 1 year continuously in care (18% and 21%, respectively).

**Figure 5.7: Children in out-of-home care, by length of time continuously in care, 30 June 2019 (per cent)**



**Notes**

1. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
2. 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.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.14.

## Long-term out-of-home care

Where there is ongoing case management to achieve a permanent care arrangement, and/or to ensure stability of placement in out-of-home care, some children remain in long-term out-of-home care for 2 years or more. Chapter 6 reports on children who have exited out-of-home care to permanent care arrangements.

### Age and Indigenous status

Approximately 30,300 (67%) of the 44,900 children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019 had been in long-term care (2 years or more) (Supplementary table S5.14).

Most (70%) were aged 5–14 and 42% were Indigenous (Supplementary table S5.15).

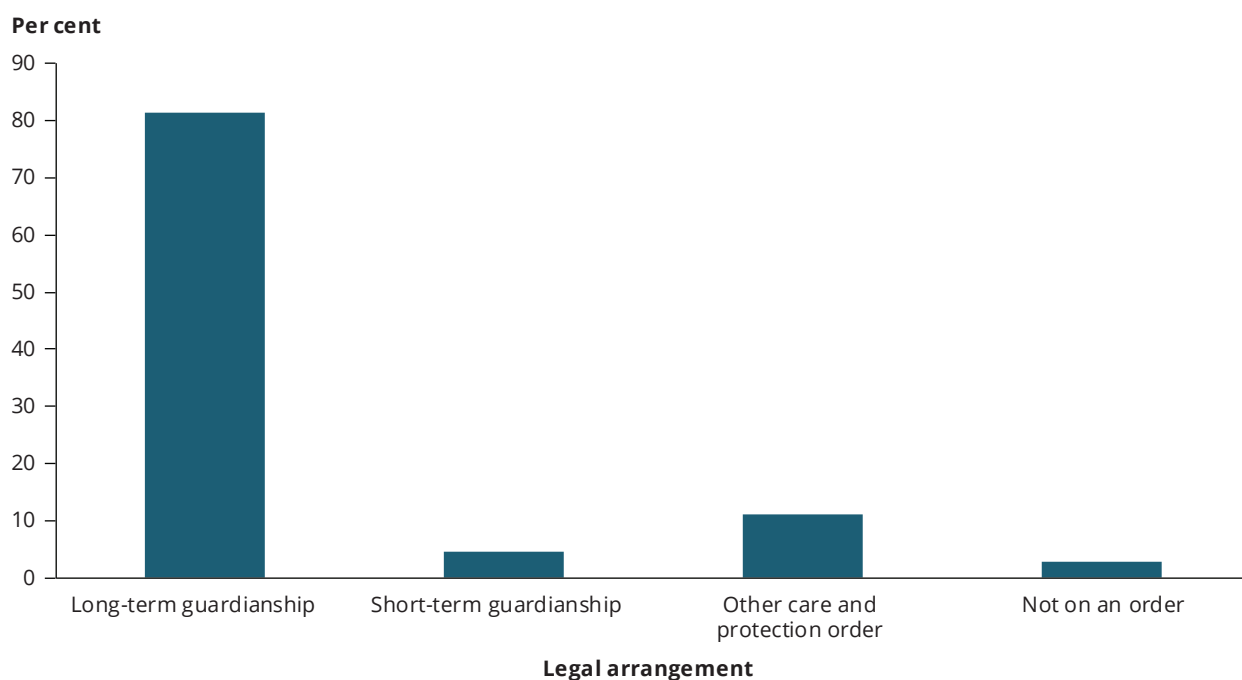


## Legal arrangement

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

- most (81%) were on long-term guardianship orders
- 5% were on short-term guardianship orders
- 11% were on other types of orders and 3% were not on an order (S5.16).

**Figure 5.8: Children in long-term out-of-home care, by legal arrangement, 30 June 2019 (per cent)**



### Notes

1. This figure includes only children who had been continuously in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019.
2. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.16.

Most children who had been in care for 2 or more years were on long-term guardianship or custody orders living in home-based care with a foster (39%) or relative/kin carer (36%) (Supplementary table S5.16).

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

## What are the characteristics of children no longer considered to be in out-of-home care?

This section includes further details on some children that, as of 2019, are no longer considered to be in out-of-home care. This includes children on third-party parental responsibility orders and children on immigration orders. Although New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia excluded children on these orders from out-of-home care in previous years, this section reports on all children on third-party and immigration orders in Australia to provide a national picture of the children no longer in scope.

Definitions of out-of-home care placements were based on national counting rules associated with living arrangement data provided by jurisdictions. Conversely, the counting rules for third-party or immigration placements are based solely on the type of child protection orders that are in place for a child. That is, a child is counted as being in a third-party placement if they have a third-party parental responsibility order in place, regardless of the actual type of living arrangement they are in (which would typically be foster care, relative/kin care, residential care and so on), and the same applies for immigration orders.

### Children on third-party parental responsibility orders

Finalised third-party parental responsibility 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 is often a long-term carer, such as a relative or foster carer who has indicated a desire to have guardianship of a child without ongoing case management. In such cases, third-party parental responsibility may be ordered, with parental responsibility transferred to a relative, foster carer, or other nominated person, with a view to creating a more permanent arrangement for the child.

Children placed on third-party parental responsibility orders are not considered in-scope for out-of-home care because the minister or executive no longer has guardianship of the child. All states and territories continue to fund carers of children on third-party parental responsibility orders, and some (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory) continue to provide some level of case management. New South Wales counts some of these children as being in out-of-home care where the department continues to work towards a permanency outcome (see Box 5.2).

At 30 June 2019, nearly 9,200 children on third-party parental responsibility orders were not considered to be in out-of-home care (Table 5.3). This represents 16% of all children with an active order on 30 June.

Nationally, 28% of children on third-party parental responsibility orders and not considered to be in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019 were Indigenous (Table 5.4).

**Table 5.3: Children on third-party parental responsibility orders who are not considered to be in out-of-home care, by age and state or territory, 30 June 2019 (number and per cent)**

Age	NSW <sup>(a)(b)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA <sup>(b)</sup>	Tas	ACT <sup>(b)</sup>	NT <sup>(c)</sup>	Total
<b>Number</b>									
0–4	290	270	73	56	9	9	7	0	714
5–9	898	1,035	403	240	58	46	27	0	2,707
10–14	1,225	1,253	697	326	90	119	40	0	3,750
15–17	637	665	410	157	39	58	23	0	1,989
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>3,223</b>	<b>1,583</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,160</b>
<b>Per cent</b>									
0–4	9.5	8.4	4.6	7.2	4.6	3.9	7.2	..	7.8
5–9	29.4	32.1	25.5	30.8	29.6	19.8	27.8	..	29.6
10–14	40.2	38.9	44.0	41.8	45.9	51.3	41.2	..	40.9
15–17	20.9	20.6	25.9	20.2	19.9	25.0	23.7	..	21.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) New South Wales data for out-of-home care include children on parental responsibility orders to relatives and non-relatives (third-party parental responsibility orders – out-of-home care) where there is generally ongoing case management. Children who are in the independent care of their guardian (third-party parental responsibility orders – non out-of-home care) are considered as on an out-of-scope order. Only children on the latter order types are counted as being on third-party parental responsibility orders for New South Wales in this table. Therefore, counts of children on third-party parental responsibility orders reported here may not match data published elsewhere.

(b) There is generally no ongoing case management for children on third-party parental responsibility orders, except in South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, and for some children in New South Wales and Queensland (for children subject to long-term orders granting guardianship to other suitable persons only).

(c) Although the Northern Territory does have legislation supporting third-party parental responsibility orders, it does not currently have any in place.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

**Table 5.4: Children on third-party parental responsibility orders who are not considered to be in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status and state or territory, 30 June 2019 (number and per cent)**

Indigenous status	NSW <sup>(a)(b)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA <sup>(b)</sup>	Tas	ACT <sup>(b)</sup>	NT <sup>(c)</sup>	Total
<b>Number</b>									
Indigenous	1,036	391	578	397	27	58	30	0	2,517
Non-Indigenous	2,013	2,832	1,004	381	169	172	67	0	6,638
Not stated	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>3,223</b>	<b>1,583</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,160</b>
<b>Per cent</b>									
Indigenous	34.0	12.1	36.5	51.0	13.8	25.0	30.9	..	27.5
Non-Indigenous	66.0	87.9	63.4	48.9	86.2	74.1	69.1	..	72.5
Not stated	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.9	0.0	..	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) New South Wales data for out-of-home care include children on parental responsibility orders to relatives and non-relatives (third-party parental responsibility orders – out-of-home care) where there is generally ongoing case management. Children who are in the independent care of their guardian (third-party parental responsibility orders – non out-of-home care) are considered as on an out-of-scope order. Only children on the latter order types are counted as being on third-party parental responsibility orders for New South Wales in this table. Therefore, counts of children on third-party parental responsibility orders reported here may not match data published elsewhere.

(b) There is generally no ongoing case management for children on third-party parental responsibility orders, except in South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, and for some children in New South Wales and Queensland (for children subject to long-term orders granting guardianship to other suitable persons only).

(c) Although the Northern Territory does have legislation supporting third-party parental responsibility orders, it does not currently have any in place.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

## Children on immigration orders

The Minister for Immigration is the legal guardian for unaccompanied humanitarian minors and children aged under 18 who have entered Australia without a relative to care for them. However, an immigration order made under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946* may be used to assign custody of the child to the department responsible for child protection. The Commonwealth retains legal responsibility and provides funding for these children and specific child protection concerns will not have been identified through the statutory child protection system. Children on immigration orders are counted in the state or territory where the order operates, regardless of where the child lives.

At 30 June 2019, there were 12 children on immigration orders: 3 in Western Australia, 8 in South Australia and 1 in the Australian Capital Territory (Supplementary table S4.10).

## Has the number of children in out-of-home care changed over time?

**This is the first year that a single nationally consistent definition of out-of-home care has been applied across all states and territories.**

**Differences in definitions between jurisdictions in previous years mean that the trend data presented in this chapter must be interpreted with caution.**

To put the change resulting from the national definition of out-of-home care in context, out-of-home care trend data in this chapter are presented along with information about the number of children in placements now considered to be outside the scope of out-of-home care reporting.

Specifically, information is presented about the number of children in out-of-home care in a given year (based on jurisdiction-specific definitions used in each respective year and as published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*) together with information about the number of children who were not considered to be in out-of-home care due to being on third-party parental responsibility orders. Children on third-party parental responsibility orders make up the majority of children now consistently excluded from national counts of children in out-of-home care.

When interpreting the trends presented in this chapter, it is important to note that:

- prior to 2018–19, the reporting of out-of-home care was not nationally consistent
- Western Australia has always excluded children on third-party parental responsibility orders from their definition of out-of-home care
- some jurisdictions adopted definitions of out-of-home care that excluded children on third-party parental responsibility orders in previous years. These jurisdictions were:
  - New South Wales in 2014–15 (for children on third-party parental responsibility orders where there is no case management and the care arrangement is considered a permanent arrangement)
  - Victoria in 2017–18.

## Trends in the number of children in out-of-home care

Between 30 June 2015 and 30 June 2017, the number of children in out-of-home care rose 10% (from 43,400 to 47,900) before falling 5% to 45,800 in 2018 and then 2% to 44,900 in 2019 (Figure 5.9).

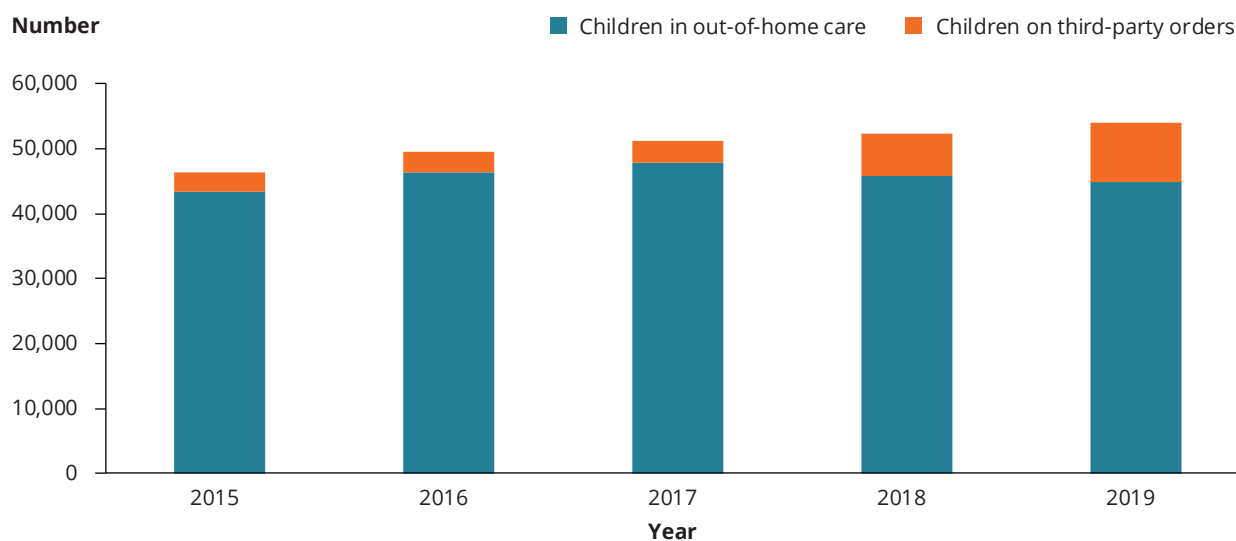
The falls since 2017–18 correspond with jurisdictions joining New South Wales and Western Australia in adopting definitions of out-of-home care that exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

The number of children not considered to be in out-of-home care due to being on third-party parental responsibility orders has risen from about 2,900 at 30 June 2015 to almost 9,200 at 30 June 2019 (Figure 5.9 and Supplementary table T3). This increase over time reflects states and territories gradually adopting definitions of out-of-home care that excluded children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

The total number of children in out-of-home care, plus those not considered to be in out-of-home care due to being on a third-party parental responsibility order as per the national definition, has risen 17%, from 46,300 at 30 June 2015 to 54,100 in 2018–19 (Supplementary table T3).

For state and territory trend data on the number and rate of children in out-of-home care between 30 June 2015 and 30 June 2019, see Table A1. For additional details on the number of children nationally who are not considered to be in out-of-home care due to being on third-party parental responsibility orders see Supplementary table T3.

**Figure 5.9: Children in out-of-home care and children not considered to be in out-of-home care due to being on third-party parental responsibility orders, 30 June 2015 to 30 June 2019 (number)**



**Notes**

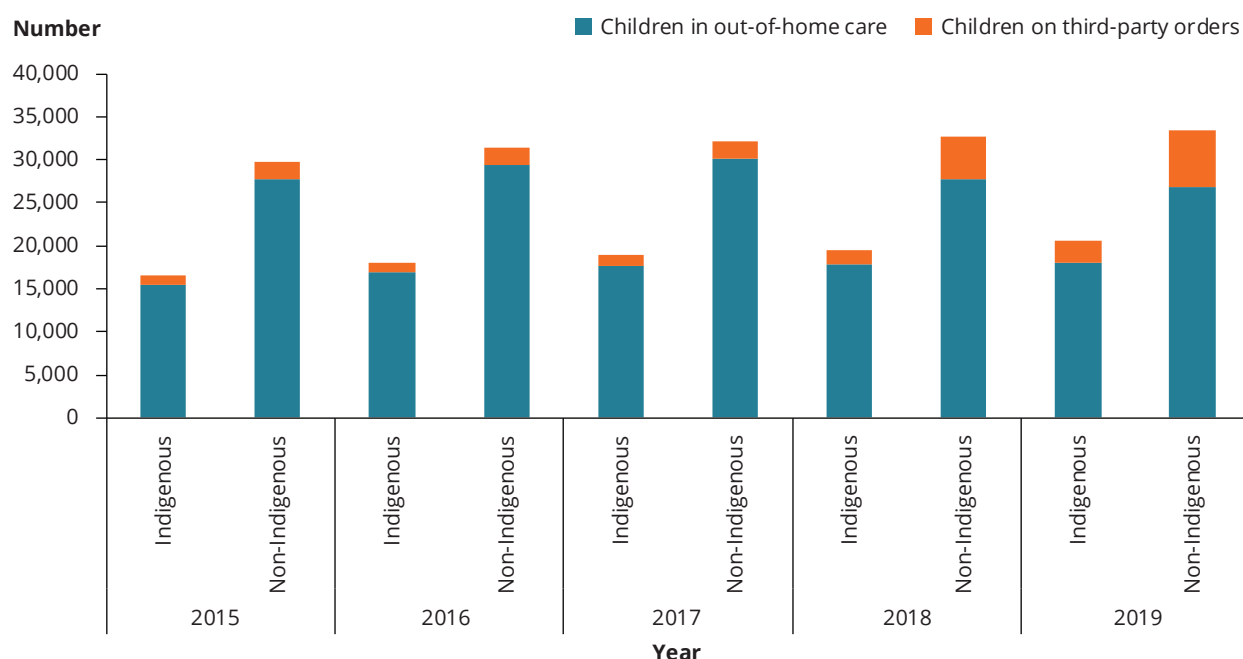
1. Children in out-of-home care presented in this figure are based on jurisdiction-specific definitions of out-of-home care that applied at the respective year as published in previous *Child protection Australia* reports. Due to differences in definitions between jurisdictions and over time, comparisons between years should be made with caution.
2. Children on immigration orders are not considered to be in out-of-home care under the national definition. In previous years, these children may have been counted as being in out-of-home care by some jurisdictions. At 30 June, the number of children on immigration orders was 22 in 2016, 17 in 2017, 14 in 2018 and 12 in 2019. This data was not available in 2015.
3. From 2018–19, a national definition for out-of-home care has been implemented which excludes children on third-party parental responsibility orders. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
4. Third-party parental responsibility orders have always been excluded from the definition of out-of-home care by Western Australia and were excluded by New South Wales from 2014–15 and by Victoria from 2017–18. From 2018–19, under the national definition of out-of-home care, all states and territories exclude these order types from out-of-home care reporting.
5. New South Wales data for out-of-home care include children on parental responsibility orders to relatives and non-relatives (third-party parental responsibility orders – out-of-home care) where there is generally ongoing case management. Children who are in the independent care of their guardian (third-party parental responsibility orders – non out-of-home care) are considered as on an out-of-scope order. Only children on the latter order types are counted as being on third-party parental responsibility orders for New South Wales in this figure. Therefore, counts of children on third-party or immigration orders presented here may not match data published elsewhere.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) T3.

Trends for the number of children in out-of-home care were different for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children:

- for Indigenous children, the number of children in out-of-home care rose steadily by a total of 16% between 2015 and 2019, from 15,500 to 18,000
- for non-Indigenous children, the trend followed a similar pattern to the national trend, rising 8% between 2015 and 2017, from 27,800 to 30,100, before falling 11% to 26,900 in 2019 (Figure 5.10).

**Figure 5.10: Children in out-of-home care and children not considered to be in out-of-home care due to being on third-party parental responsibility orders, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2015 to 30 June 2019 (number)**



#### Notes

1. Children in out-of-home care presented in this figure are based on jurisdiction-specific definitions of out-of-home care that applied at the respective year as published in previous *Child protection Australia* reports. Due to differences in definitions between jurisdictions and over time, comparisons between years should be made with caution.
2. Children on immigration orders are not considered to be in out-of-home care under the national definition. In previous years, these children may have been counted as being in out-of-home care by some jurisdictions. At 30 June, the number of children on immigration orders was 22 in 2016, 17 in 2017, 14 in 2018 and 12 in 2019. This data was not available in 2015.
3. From 2018–19, a national definition for out-of-home care has been implemented which excludes children on third-party parental responsibility orders. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
4. Third-party parental responsibility orders have always been excluded from the definition of out-of-home care by Western Australia and were excluded by New South Wales from 2014–15 and by Victoria from 2017–18. From 2018–19, under the national definition of out-of-home care, all states and territories exclude these order types from out-of-home care reporting.
5. New South Wales data for out-of-home care include children on parental responsibility orders to relatives and non-relatives (third-party parental responsibility orders – out-of-home care) where there is generally ongoing case management. Children who are in the independent care of their guardian (third-party parental responsibility orders – non out-of-home care) are considered as on an out-of-scope order. Only children on the latter order types are counted as being on third-party parental responsibility orders for New South Wales in this figure. Therefore, counts of children on third-party parental responsibility orders presented here may not match data published elsewhere.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) T3.

## Trends in the rates of children in out-of-home care

Nationally, there was a small increase in the rate for children in out-of-home care in Australia at 30 June, from 8 per 1,000 children in 2015 to 9 per 1,000 children in 2017, followed by a fall back to 8 per 1,000 children in 2019 (Supplementary table T2).

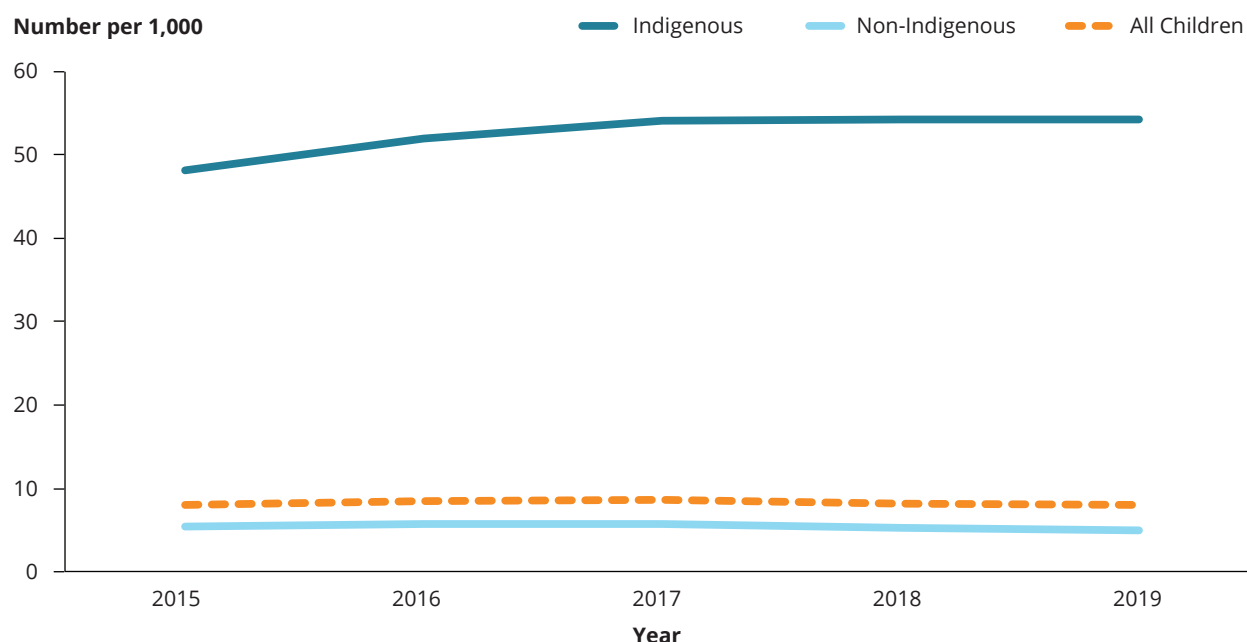
For Indigenous children in out-of-home care, rates rose between 2015 and 2017, from 48 per 1,000 children to 54 per 1,000 Indigenous children. Since then, the rate has been relatively stable (Supplementary table T2).

For non-Indigenous children in out-of-home care, rates were stable at 6 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children from 2015 to 2017, with a fall to 5 per 1,000 children in 2019 (Figure 5.11).

Between 2015 and 2019, the rate for the total number of children in out-of-home care or not considered to be in out-of-home care due to being on a third-party parental responsibility order rose slightly from 9 to 10 per 1,000 children. For Indigenous children, this rate saw a greater rise, from 51 to 62 per 1,000 Indigenous children. For non-Indigenous children, this rate remained stable at 6 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children (Supplementary table T3).

As with the changes to number of children in care, the fall in national and non-Indigenous rates and stabilising of the Indigenous rate since 2017 coincides with jurisdictions joining New South Wales and Western Australia in adopting the national definition of out-of-home care that excludes children on third-party parental responsibility orders. Due to differences in the definition of out-of-home care over time, these trends should be interpreted with caution.

**Figure 5.11: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2015 to 30 June 2019 (rate)**



### Notes

1. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
2. See Appendix B (online) for the methodology used to calculate rates.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) T2.



## 6 Permanency

### Key findings

- 13% (4,400) of children in out-of-home care at any time during 2018–19 (35,000 children, excluding NSW) exited to a permanency outcome during 2018–19.
- Over 3,700 children were reunified with family and a further 680 exited out-of-home care to third-party parental responsibility orders.
- 82% (nearly 25,000) of children in out-of-home care on 30 June 2019, who had been in care for at least 2 years (nearly 30,300 children), were on long-term guardianship orders.
- Of the children in out-of-home care placements for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019, 83% (nearly 14,000) were in the main care arrangement for 2 years or more.

### What is permanency?

Permanency in the context of child protection can vary depending on child and family circumstances. However, the main aim of permanency is to maintain or establish meaningful connections with other caring adults in the child's life such as family, friends, and the community. In permanency planning, the preferred outcome for children in out-of-home care is to reunify them with family as soon as possible. When family reunification is not possible, permanency planning efforts focus on placing children with another legally permanent family such as relatives, adoptive families who obtain legal custody, or guardians (See also Box 6.1; Osmond & Tilbury 2012).

In Australia, most states and territories prioritise specific permanency-related actions and timeframes in children's case planning. By incorporating permanency goals into a child's case planning, jurisdictions can actively seek the most suitable immediate placement, while preparing for long-term care arrangements and better developmental outcomes. The timeframe for reunification varies across jurisdictions, but for most jurisdictions, if a child is not reunified within 2 years then a long-term, stable placement will be pursued (Appendix G online).

#### Box 6.1: Dimensions of Permanency

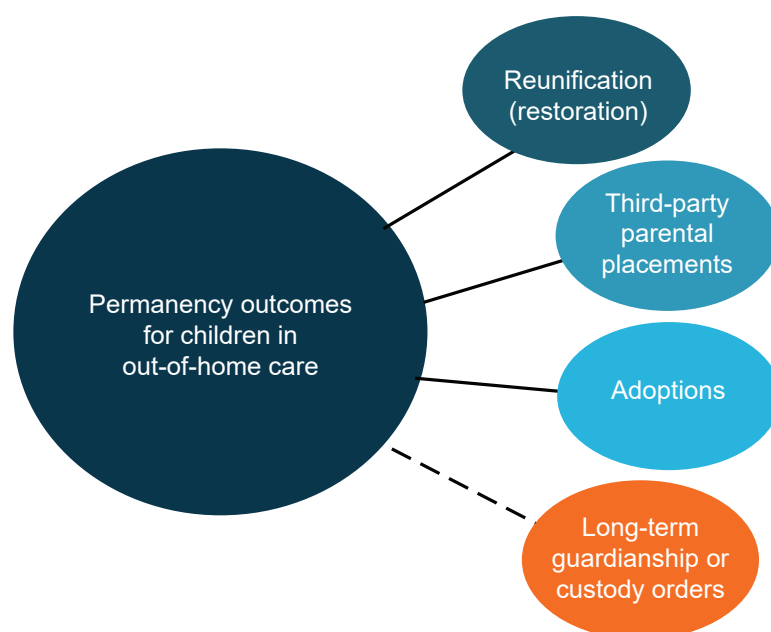
Permanency can be conceptualised as having 3 key dimensions (Osmond & Tilbury 2012:100) which seek to align with the best interests of the child:

- relational permanence: the opportunity to experience positive, caring and stable relationships with significant others
- physical permanence: stable living arrangements
- legal permanence: the legal arrangements of a child's custody and guardianship.

In practice, this means that jurisdictions will seek timely reunification while at the same time exploring permanent care options such as third-party parental placements or adoption in the event that safe and enduring reunification is not possible. In some cases, the best option for a child is for them to remain in care on a long-term guardianship order while seeking a long-term, stable and predictable placement (Figure 6.1).



**Figure 6.1. Permanency events**



*Note:* Refer to the glossary for an explanation of items.

## Why is permanency important?

Children who are removed from their homes and experience multiple placements can experience profound trauma, distress and a sense of loss and not belonging. These in turn can lead to distrust and a fear of forming secure healthy relationships, increased behavioural problems, poor academic achievement, physical and mental health problems and poor outcomes in adulthood (NSCDC 2004; Conradi et al. 2011; Chesmore et al. 2017; Vimpani & Delima 2011).

Permanency provides children in out-of-home care with the foundation to prepare for and participate in adulthood and pursue life goals, such as education and employment. Overall, permanency achievement is said to play a key role in young people's successful transition to adulthood (Salazara et al. 2018).

## Permanency for children in out-of-home care

In August 2017, Community Services ministers committed to 'reduce state guardianship of children in out of home care by securing permanency outcomes, including adoption, for children who cannot be safely reunified with their families within a reasonable time. This is to ensure that abused and neglected children are not denied the right to grow up in a family that is permanent, stable and safe' (Seselja 2017).

Given the importance of ensuring stability and permanency for children, ministers agreed to measure their progress through a national data and evaluation framework, since named the Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework (Prentice 2018) (see Box 6.2).

Commonwealth and state and territory officials were given responsibility for developing a National Work Plan to give effect to ministers' decisions on permanency reform.

### **Box 6.2: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework**

The Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework provides objective measurements of performance in out-of-home care with regard to permanency in 4 domains:

- timely and informed decision-making on permanency, that takes into account the views of the child
- permanent, safe and stable care through family support to enable children to remain at home; reunification with parents, family or former guardian; ensuring children feel safe and secure; and providing fewer placements
- lifelong relationships, belonging, identity and connection by ensuring that children have connection to family, culture, community thus building a sense of identity, belonging
- achieve better life outcomes and reach their full potential through strong physical, social and mental health; quality education and employment and that children leave care equipped for the future.

This chapter presents 15 indicators covering the first 2 domains. Note that not all data are available for all states/territories. Appendix B (online) details technical specifications for indicators and methodological aspects of data derivation and reporting.

## **How are permanency outcomes measured?**

The Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework (the Framework) currently contains 15 indicators covering 2 domains: permanent, safe and stable care; and timely, informed decision-making on permanency (see Table 6.1).

Under domain 1, the Framework includes some contextual indicators of children in out-of-home care and duration in care as well as aspects of permanency planning and outcomes: preservation, reunification and permanent care, and placement stability.

Preservation means that children will remain at home following the substantiation of a risk of harm report.

Reunification (also known as restoration) means a return to the parent/guardian and environment from which the child was removed through the child protection process. As such, reunification is mainly with birth parents. Due to a lack of a nationally agreed definition of reunifications, current reporting by jurisdictions is based on local definitions.

Permanency outcomes are also achieved through third-party parental responsibility orders, which grant guardianship to a third party that is not the minister/executive, and adoptions.

Placement stability is measured by looking at data on children not returning to out-of-home care after having exited through one of these permanency events in the previous reporting period.

Domain 2 includes indicators on timely decision-making.

As well as reporting on the number and characteristics (age, Indigenous status, time in care) of children exiting to these events in a given reporting period, the Framework also measures how many children return to out-of-home care after having exited through one of these permanency events in the previous reporting period.

**Table 6.1: Permanency Indicators 2018–19: national summary**

Indicator number and name		National data
<b>Domain 1 Permanent, safe and stable care</b>		
1.1a	The number and rate of children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019	Nearly 45,000 children in care (8 per 1,000 children, Table S5.5)
1.1b	The number and proportion of children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019, by continuous time in out-of-home care	67% had been in care for 2 years or more (Table S5.14)
<b>Preservation</b>		
1.2	The proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiation in 2017–18 who were not admitted to out-of-home care within 12 months of substantiation	77% (Tables S6.1, S6.2)
<b>Reunification and permanent care</b>		
1.3	The proportion of children aged 0 to 17 in out-of-home care who were reunified during 2018–19	25% (Tables S6.3, S6.4)
1.4	The proportion of children aged 0 to 17 in out-of-home care who exited to a third-party parental care arrangement in 2018–19	2% (Tables S6.5, S6.6)
1.5	The proportion of children aged 0 to 17 who were adopted from out-of-home care during 2018–19	1 child (excluding NSW)
1.6	The proportion of children aged 0 to 16 who exited out-of-home care to a permanency outcome in 2017–18 and did not return within 12 months	85% (Tables S6.7, S6.8)
1.6a	The proportion of children aged 0 to 16 who were reunified in 2017–18 and did not return to out-of-home care in 12 months or less	82% (Tables S6.9, S6.10)
1.6b	The proportion of children aged 0 to 16 who exited out-of-home care to a third-party parental care arrangement in 2017–18 and did not return in 12 months or less	All but 2 children
1.6c	The proportion of children aged 0 to 16 who were adopted from out-of-home care in 2017–18 and did not return to out-of-home care in 12 months or less	No children
<b>Stability (legal, placement and relationship)</b>		
1.7a	The proportion of children in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June by legal and living arrangement, age and Indigenous status	82% on long-term guardianship orders (Table S5.16)
1.7b	The proportion of children in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June by continuous time in out-of-home care and the number of placements in the last 2 years	62% of children had only 1 placement (Tables S6.11, S6.12)
1.7c	The proportion of children in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June by time spent in the main care arrangement for the last 2 years	83% of children had spent more than 2 years in their main placement (Table S6.13)
<b>Domain 2 Timely and informed decision-making on permanency</b>		
2.1	Time from admission to out-of-home care to achieving a finalised care and protection order	68% of children achieved a finalised care and protection order within 6 months of admission (Table S6.14)
2.2	Time from admission to out-of-home care to achieving a permanency outcome	47% of children achieved a permanency outcome within 6 months (Table S6.15)

Box 6.3 outlines data limitations and comparability issues for permanency reporting.

### **Box 6.3: Data limitations for permanency reporting**

Permanency reporting is based on jurisdictions having adopted a national definition of out-of-home care (see Box 5.1). In particular, it is based on the recognition that third-party placements represent a safe and stable permanent outcome.

Some notable issues, which affect the completeness and comparability of data across jurisdictions presented in this chapter, include:

- There is no nationally agreed definition of reunifications. As such, comparison of reunification data across jurisdictions should acknowledge that reporting of permanency events relating to reunification is based on local definitions of reunification.
- Third-party parental responsibility orders vary across jurisdictions (see Box 5.2), with the biggest difference relating to the provision of ongoing case management in some cases in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland.
- Some indicators can be affected by different thresholds (for example, for substantiation) across jurisdictions, which can affect comparability and interpretation.

Further insights into the comparability of permanency data across jurisdictions can be found online in Appendix B (which outlines the methodology for permanency reporting) and Appendix F (which summarises permanency-related concepts and legislation across jurisdictions).

## **How many children in out-of-home care have achieved a permanency outcome?**

### **Children in out-of-home care**

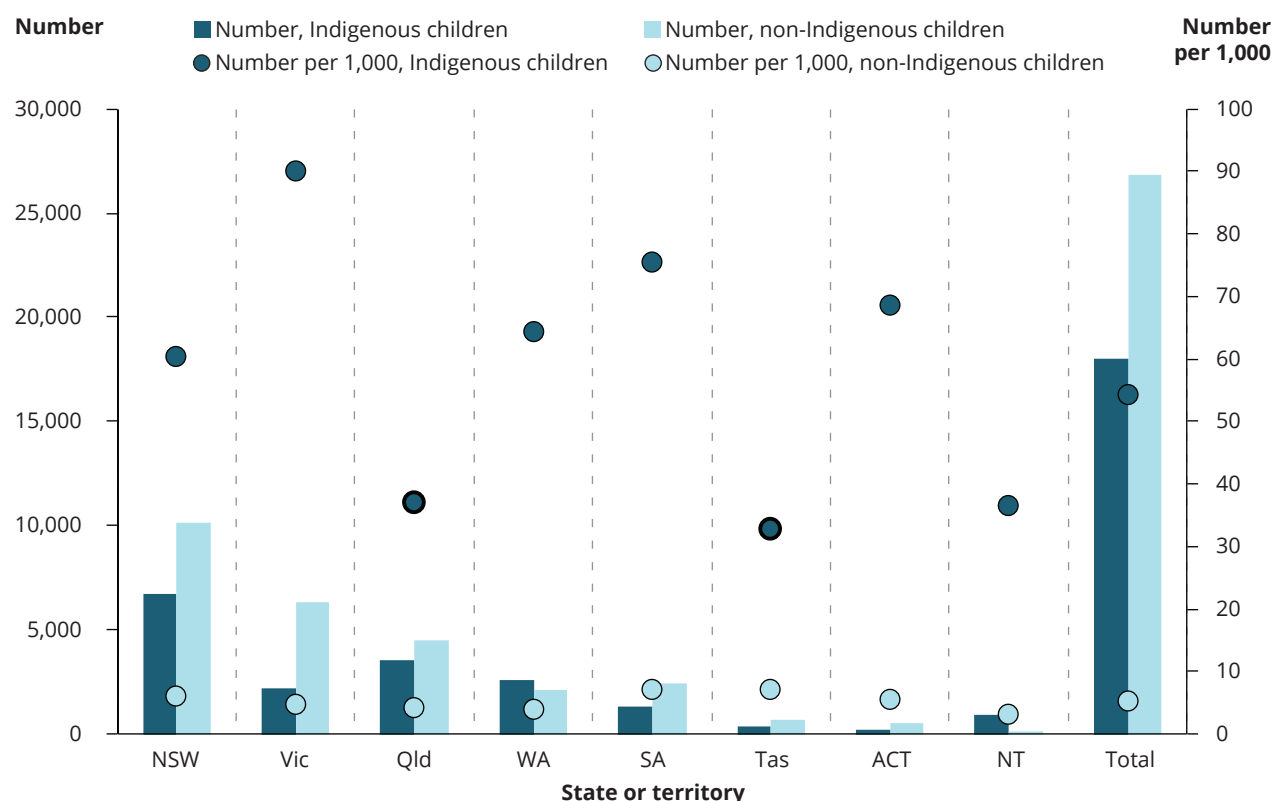
The indicators presented in this chapter relate to a number of permanency outcomes for children in out-of-home care. Detailed information on children in out-of-home care, including over time and population groups, is provided in Chapter 5.

At 30 June 2019, about 44,900 Australian children were in out-of-home care (see Chapter 5, Table 5.1). This count is based on the nationally consistent definition of out-of-home care which, from 2018–19 onwards, consistently excludes children on various order and placement types, most notably third-party parental responsibility orders, from the scope of out-of-home care (see Chapter 5, Box 5.2 for details of the national definition).

At 30 June 2019, nearly 18,000 Indigenous children were in out-of-home care (Supplementary table S5.5). For all states combined, the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was approximately 11 times that of non-Indigenous children (54 and 5 per 1,000 children respectively). The rates of Indigenous children in out-of-home care vary greatly by state, ranging from 33 per 1,000 children in Tasmania to 90 per 1,000 in Victoria (Figure 6.2 and Supplementary table S5.10).

In contrast, there is much less variability by state for non-Indigenous children, with rates ranging from 3 per 1,000 in the Northern Territory to 7 per 1,000 in South Australia and Tasmania (Figure 6.2 and Supplementary table S5.10).

**Figure 6.2. Children in out-of-home care on 30 June 2019, by state or territory and Indigenous status (number and number per 1,000)**

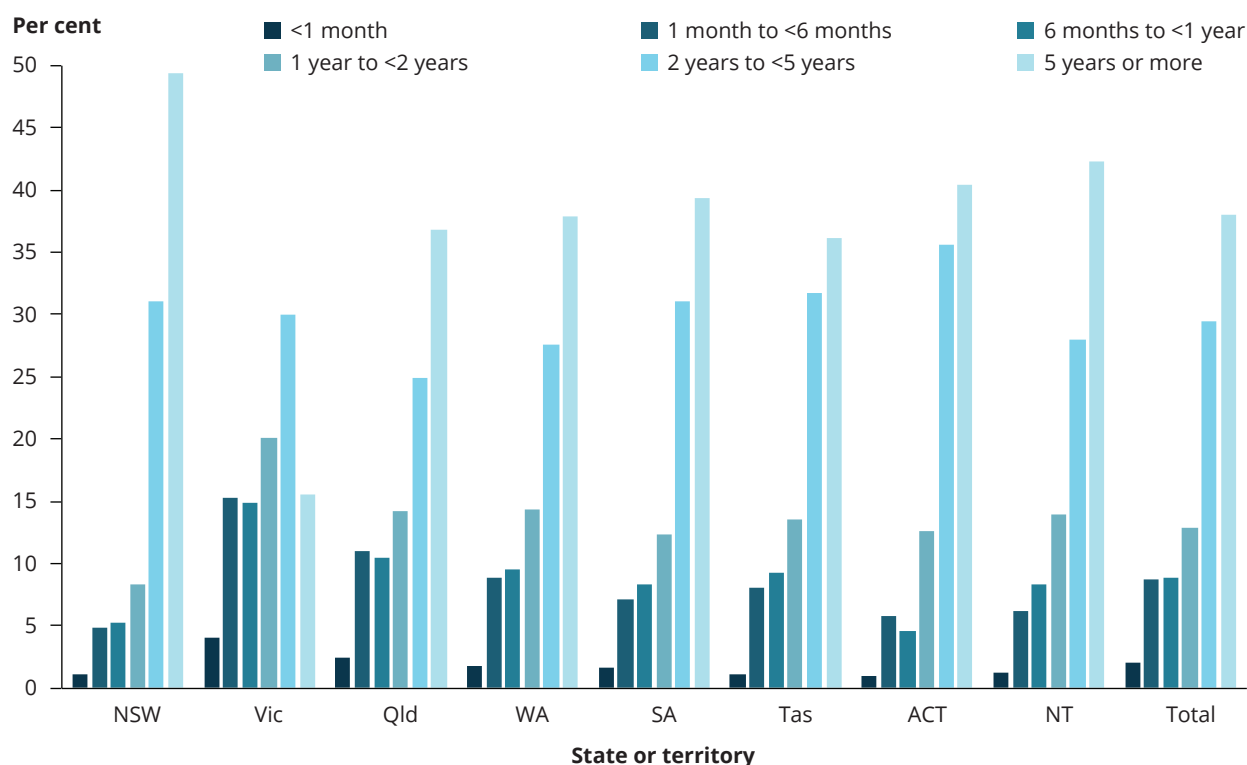


*Note:* From 2018–19, the national definition of out-of-home care has been revised to exclude children on third-party parental responsibility and immigration orders and children in pre-adoptive placements. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

*Sources:* Supplementary data tables (online) S5.5 and P4.

Nationally, the majority (67% or 30,300) of children in care at 30 June 2019 had been in care for 2 years or more (Figure 6.3). This pattern was similar in all jurisdictions, except in Victoria where less than half (45%) the children in care had been in care for 2 or more years, and New South Wales, where 81% of children had been in care for 2 or more years.

**Figure 6.3. Children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019, by state or territory and time in care (per cent)**



**Notes**

1. From 2018–19, the national definition of out-of-home care has been revised to exclude children on third-party parental responsibility and immigration orders and children in pre-adoptive placements. Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.
2. Tasmanian data 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. 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.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.14.

## Preservation

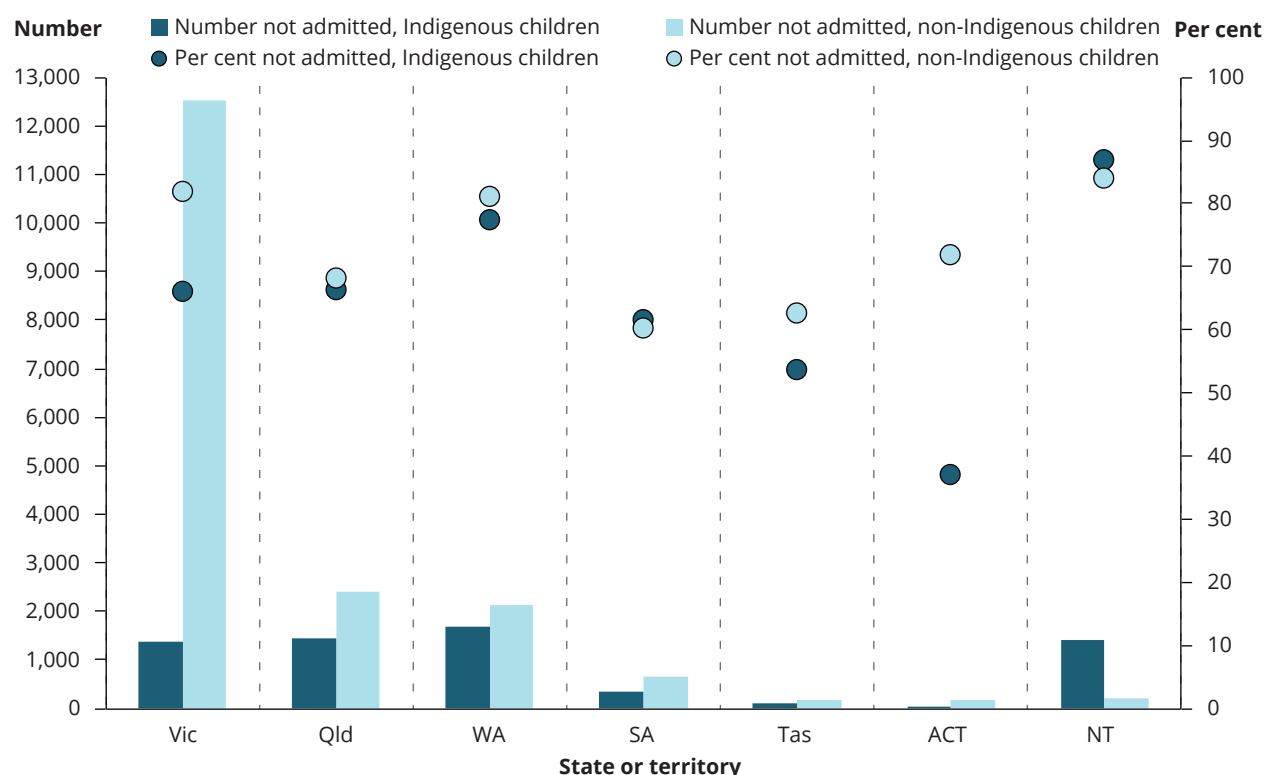
*The proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiation in 2017–18 who were not admitted to out-of-home care within 12 months of substantiation*

Preservation is a priority in permanency planning and aims to keep children in their home in a safe, stable and nurturing family wherever possible. It is also about preventing unnecessary entry into out-of-home care, through early intervention and effective family support. The effective provision of such services would see an increase in the number of children who did not enter out-of-home care following the substantiation of a risk of harm report. Current national data are available on intensive family support services only (see Chapter 8) and do not include other types of family support services, such as early intervention.

This indicator operates as a proxy for preservation, but different thresholds for substantiation in each jurisdiction affect its comparability. In addition, preservation may not always be considered an ideal outcome for the child, and this can complicate the interpretation of the indicator.

- In 2017–18, there were nearly 33,000 children in Australia, excluding New South Wales, who were the subject of a substantiation and were not in out-of-home care at the time of notification. Of these children, over 25,000 (77%) were not admitted to out-of-home care within 12 months of substantiation. The proportion not admitted to out-of-home care within 12 months varied from 61% in South Australia to 87% in the Northern Territory (Supplementary table S6.1).
- Nationally, there was little difference by Indigenous status in the proportion of children not admitted to out-of-home care within the following 12 months (Supplementary table S6.1). However, in the Australian Capital Territory 72% of non-Indigenous children were not admitted compared with only 37% of Indigenous children, and in Victoria 82% of non-Indigenous children were not admitted compared with 66% of Indigenous children (Figure 6.4).
- Admission to care rates vary by primary abuse type, ranging at the national level from 10% for sexual abuse to 40% for neglect (Supplementary table S6.2).

**Figure 6.4. Children who were the subject of a substantiation in 2017–18 and were not admitted to care within 12 months of substantiation, by state or territory and Indigenous status (number and per cent) (Indicator 1.2)**



**Notes**

1. Data presented in this figure are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. Population scope is limited to children aged 0-16 at time of substantiation, to allow for 12 months of follow-up data.
3. Substantiations arising from notifications that occur while a child is in out-of-home care are excluded.
4. Substantiation data for New South Wales are not available for 2017-18.
5. Tasmanian data 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. 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.
6. In Tasmania, the proportion of children whose Indigenous status is unknown affects the reliability of these data.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S6.1.

## Reunification and permanent care

*The proportion of children aged 0 to 17 in out-of-home care who were reunified with family during 2018–19*

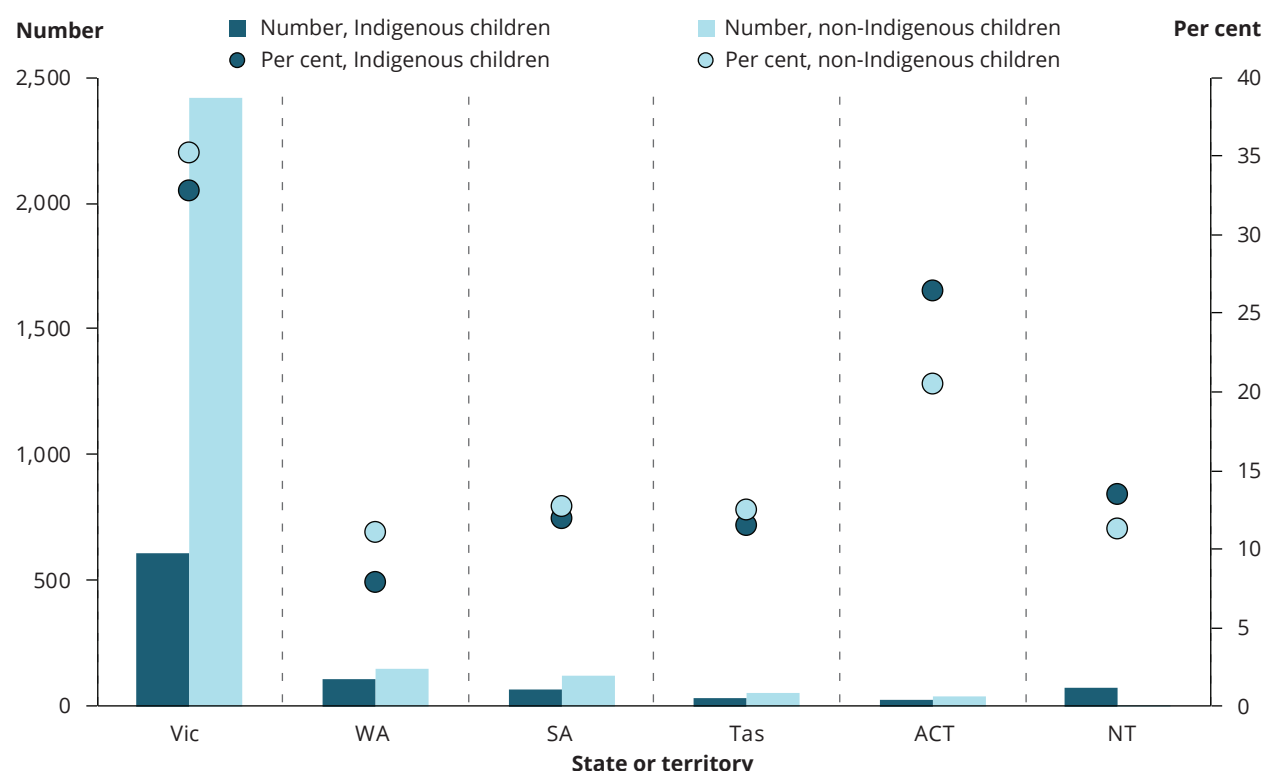
Reunification is the policy priority for children in out-of-home care across all states and territories, and aims to return a child home safely after time in care and enable that child to stay at home. This occurs when it is in the child's best interest and where it will promote long-term stability and permanency (AIHW 2016b). In the context of these indicators, reunification is considered permanency.

- There were about 14,600 children in out-of-home care, excluding those on long-term guardianship or custody orders, for whom reunification was a possibility in 2018–19. Of these children, over 3,700 (25%) were reunified during this time (Supplementary table S6.3). Of the 4,700 Indigenous children for whom reunification was a possibility in 2018–19, 911 (19%) were reunified
- Reunification rates ranged from 10% in Western Australia to 35% in Victoria and were generally consistent across all age groups (excluding New South Wales and Queensland) (Figure 6.5 and Supplementary table S6.3).
- Reunification rates were higher for Indigenous children in the Australian Capital Territory; in other jurisdictions they were close to parity with non-Indigenous children (Supplementary table S6.3).
- At the national level (excluding New South Wales and Queensland), most reunifications (58%) occurred within 6 months of admission to a new episode of out-of-home care (Supplementary table S6.4).

Note that this is not an indicator of reunification success or the ongoing safety of the child. Also, when calculating reunification rates, children on long-term guardianship orders were excluded from the denominator because these children are regarded as having relatively stable placements and are not generally the focus of reunification efforts (see Appendix B online).



**Figure 6.5. Children reunified with family from out-of-home care in 2018–19, by Indigenous status and state or territory (number and per cent) (Indicator 1.3)**



**Notes**

1. Children on long-term guardianship orders were excluded from the denominator when calculating reunification rates (see Appendix B online).
2. Reunification data are not available or incomplete for New South Wales and Queensland in 2018–19.
3. In Tasmania, children are defined as 'reunified' if they have been placed with their parents for a period of greater than 2 months.
4. Excludes 52 children with unknown Indigenous status.
5. Tasmanian data 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. 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.
6. In Tasmania, the proportion of children whose Indigenous status is unknown affects the reliability of these data.

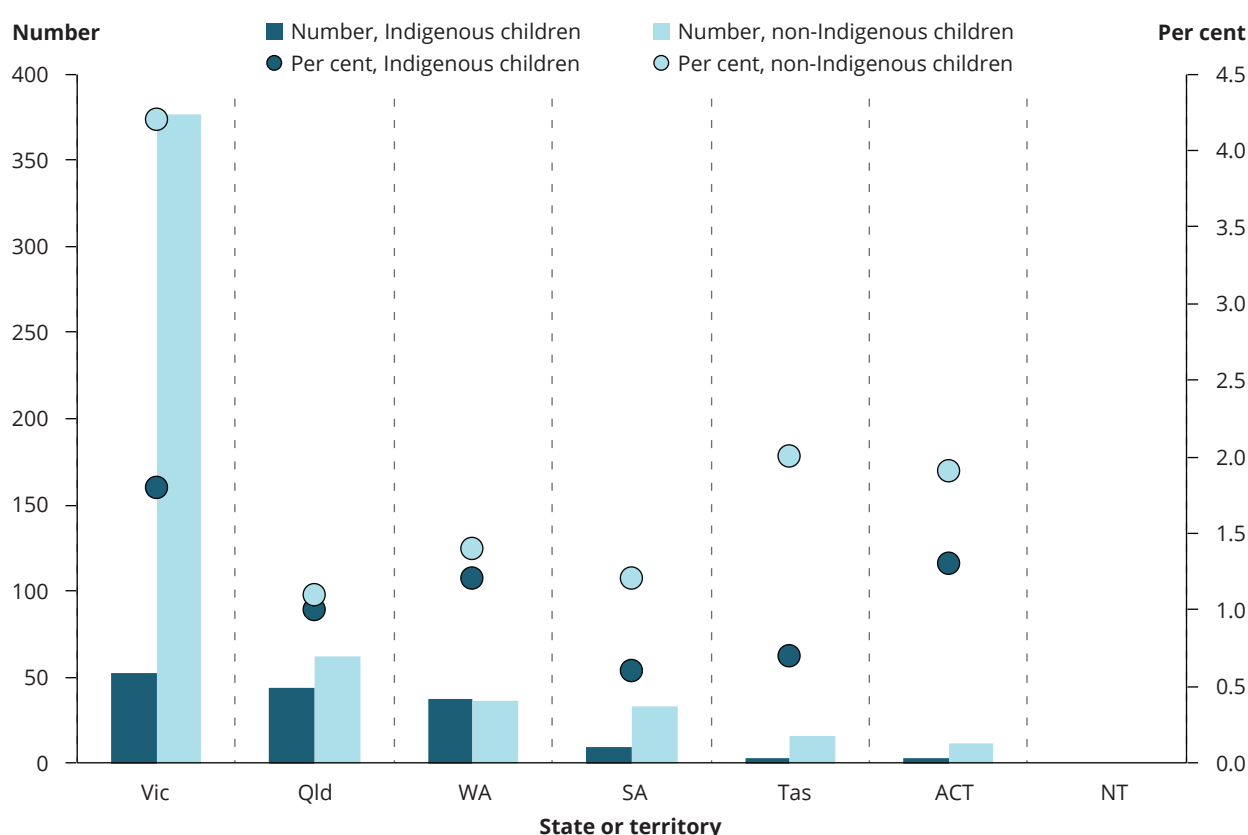
Source: Supplementary data table (online) S6.3.

***The proportion of children aged 0 to 17 in out-of-home care who exited to a third-party parental care arrangement in 2018–19***

State and territory legislation emphasises the importance of permanency planning through stability of care (see Appendix F online for further information), which is often achieved through third-party parental responsibility orders (see Chapter 5). The timing of permanency-related action is determined by the individual circumstances of the child. However, permanency planning is typically initiated as a child enters care. For many children, longer-term care arrangements such as third-party parental responsibility orders are pursued only when safe reunification is not possible, or when alternative care has been deemed the most suitable way to achieve stability for the child.

- Over 680 children (about 2% of children in care during the reporting period) left out-of-home care to a third-party parental care arrangement during 2018–19 (Figure 6.6, Supplementary table S6.5; excludes New South Wales for which complete data are not available).
- Rates of exit to third-party placements (excluding New South Wales) ranged from around 1% in South Australia and Queensland to nearly 4% in Victoria.
- Third-party parental responsibility orders were most common for younger children, ranging from nearly 3% for children aged 1 to 4 to 1% for children aged 15 to 17 (Supplementary table S6.5).
- At the national level, 4 out of 5 children had been in care for more than 2 years before commencing on a third-party parental responsibility order (Supplementary table S6.6).

**Figure 6.6. Children exiting out-of-home care to third-party parental responsibility arrangements in 2018–19, by Indigenous status and state or territory (number and per cent) (Indicator 1.4)**



**Notes**

1. There were no third-party parental responsibility orders in the Northern Territory in 2018–19.
2. Complete third-party parental responsibility order data for New South Wales are not available in 2018–19.
3. There is generally no ongoing case management for children on third-party parental responsibility orders, except in South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, and in Queensland (for children subject to long-term orders granting guardianship to other suitable persons only).
4. 118 children with unknown Indigenous status are not shown.
5. Tasmanian data 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. 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.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S6.5.

***The proportion of children aged 0 to 17 who were adopted from out-of-home care during 2018–19***

In 2018–19, there was 1 known-carer adoption from out-of-home care (New South Wales were excluded because complete data were not available).

***The proportion of children aged 0 to 16 in out-of-home care who exited out-of-home care to a permanency outcome (reunification with family, third-party care arrangement, adoption) in the previous reporting period (2017–18) and did not return within 12 months***

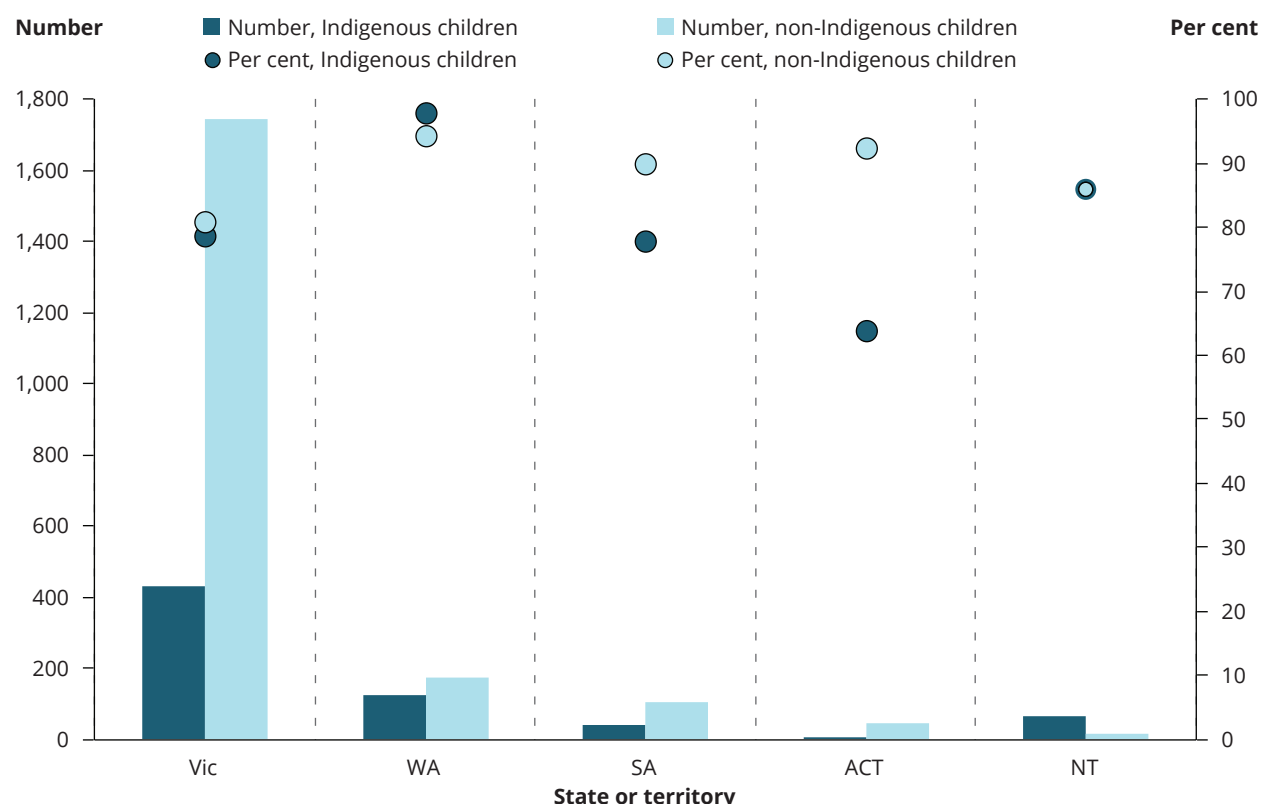
Success of permanency is marked by the fact that the child did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months of their permanency event. A child is considered to have not returned to out-of-home care if, following an exit, a new episode of out-of-home care is not commenced within 12 months. If a child has multiple exits to a permanency event during a reporting period, only the last event in the reporting period is counted.

Note that data are not available for New South Wales or Queensland.<sup>1</sup>

- Just over 4,000 children left care to a permanency event in 2017–18 (excluding New South Wales and Queensland, for which permanency data were incomplete). Of these children, over 3,400 (85%) did not return to care within 12 months (Supplementary table S6.7).
- Of the 3,400 children who were reunified in 2017–18, over 2,800 children (82%) did not return to care within 12 months (Supplementary table S6.9), though this proportion varied by state and by Indigenous status (Figure 6.7).
- At the national level, there was no marked difference in the proportion of children who did not return to care by age or Indigenous status and only a slight trend associated with time in care (tables S6.7 to S6.10). Based on data from 5 jurisdictions, 84% of Indigenous and 85% of non-Indigenous children exited out-of-home care to a permanency outcome in 2017–18 and did not return to care within 12 months (Supplementary table S6.7).
- In 2018–19, only 2 children returned to out-of-home care following an exit to a third-party parental responsibility order issued in 2017–18.
- Of the 4 children who exited out-of-home care in 2017–18 and were adopted by known-carers, none returned to care in 2018–19 (excludes New South Wales because complete data were not available).

<sup>1</sup> However, based on available data, Queensland can report that in 2017–18 there were 103 children aged 0 to 16 who exited care to a finalised third-party parental responsibility order, none of whom returned within 12 months.

**Figure 6.7. Children who exited out-of-home care to a reunification in 2017–18 and did not return to care within 12 months, by state or territory (number and per cent) (Indicator 1.6a)**



**Notes**

1. Data for New South Wales and Queensland are not available for 2018–19.
2. 6 children with unknown Indigenous status are not shown.
3. Indigenous status data for Tasmania are not published for this indicator due to small numbers.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S6.9.

## Stability for children in out-of-home care

State and territory policies relating to permanency planning suggest that children who have been in care for 2 or more years require a decision to be made regarding their long-term care arrangements (AIHW 2016b). Long-term care arrangements provide legal, placement and relationship stability.

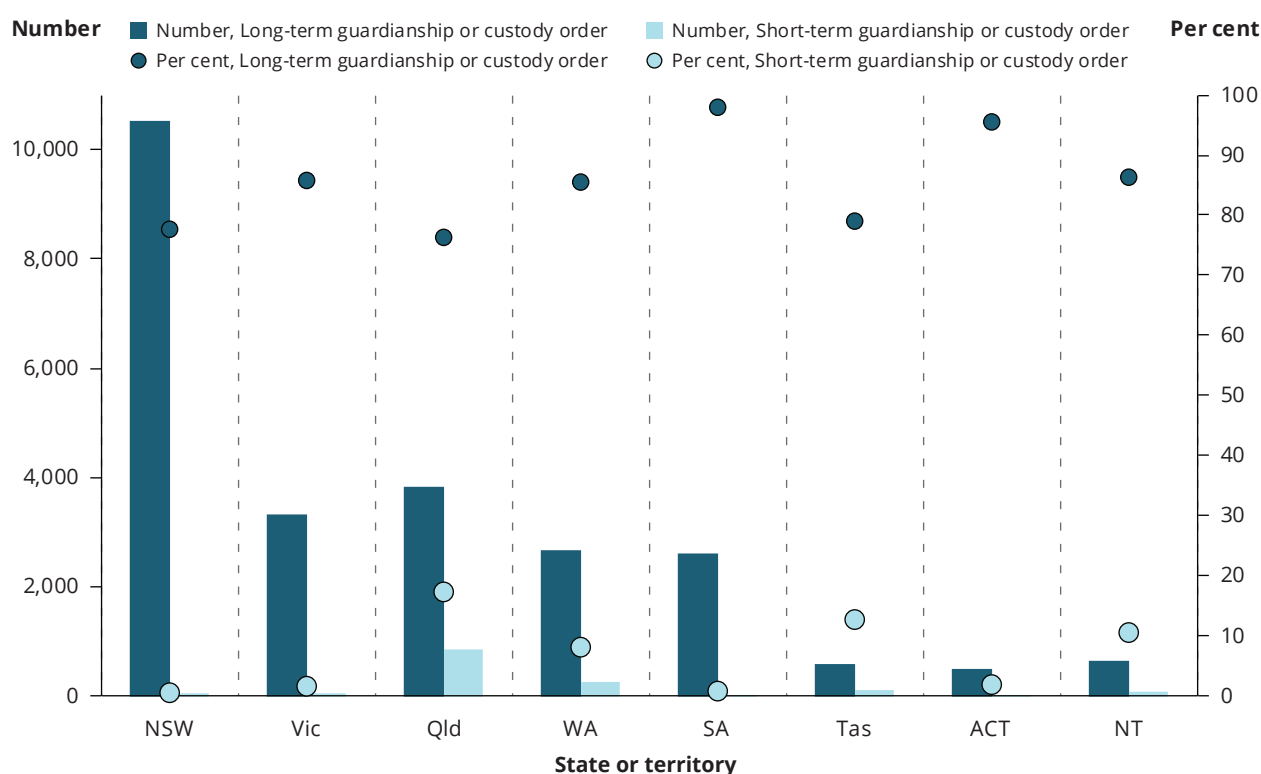
*The proportion of children in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019, by:*

- *legal and living arrangement (legal stability)*
- *continuous time in out-of-home care and the number of placements in the last 2 years (placement stability)*
- *time spent in the main care arrangement<sup>2</sup> (care arrangement of the longest duration) for the last 2 years (relationship stability)*

<sup>2</sup> 'Main care arrangement' refers to the care arrangement of the longest total duration (the sum of all care periods for each unique care arrangement, excluding any breaks). This includes placements that commenced in a previous collection period and were ongoing during the current reporting period. Therefore, time spent in the main care arrangement can include time spent outside the current reporting period.

- Of nearly 30,300 children who had been in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019, nearly 25,000 (approximately 82%) were on long-term guardianship orders (Figure 6.8; Supplementary table S5.16).
- At the national level (excluding New South Wales), there was no difference in the proportion on long-term guardianship orders by Indigenous status (Supplementary table S5.16).

**Figure 6.8. Children in out-of-home care for 2 years or more at 30 June 2019, by legal and living arrangement and state or territory (number and per cent) (Indicator 1.7a)**



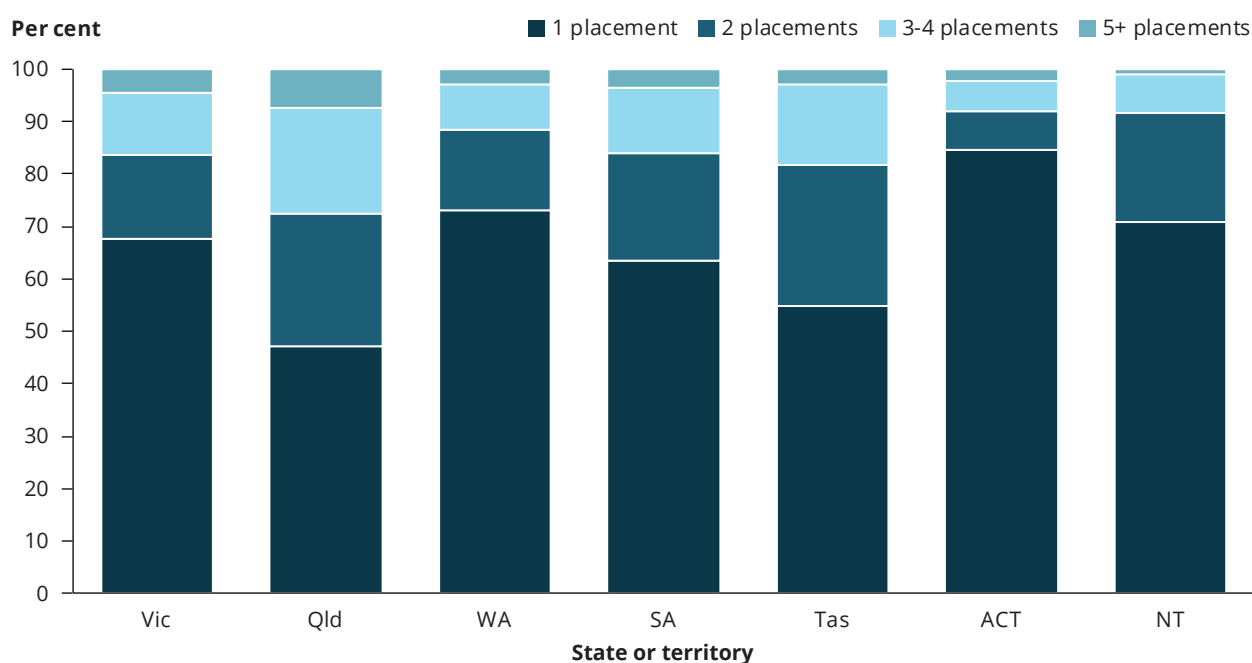
*Notes:*

1. Excludes 15 children with unknown Indigenous status.
2. Tasmanian data 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. 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.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.16.

- Of the children in out-of-home care placements for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019 (excluding New South Wales), nearly two-thirds of children (10,300 or 62%) had only 1 care arrangement in their current episode of care. A further 20% had 2 care arrangements, 14% had 3–4 care arrangements, and nearly 5% had 5 or more care arrangements (Figure 6.9).
- At the national level (excluding New South Wales), the number of placements for children in out-of-home care for 2 or more years varied little by Indigenous status or age (Supplementary table S6.12).
- The proportion of children with only 1 care arrangement varied considerably across states, ranging from 47% in Queensland to 85% in the Australian Capital Territory (Figure 6.9 and Supplementary table S6.12).

**Figure 6.9: Proportion of children in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019, by state or territory and number of placements in the last 2 years (per cent) (Indicator 1.7b)**



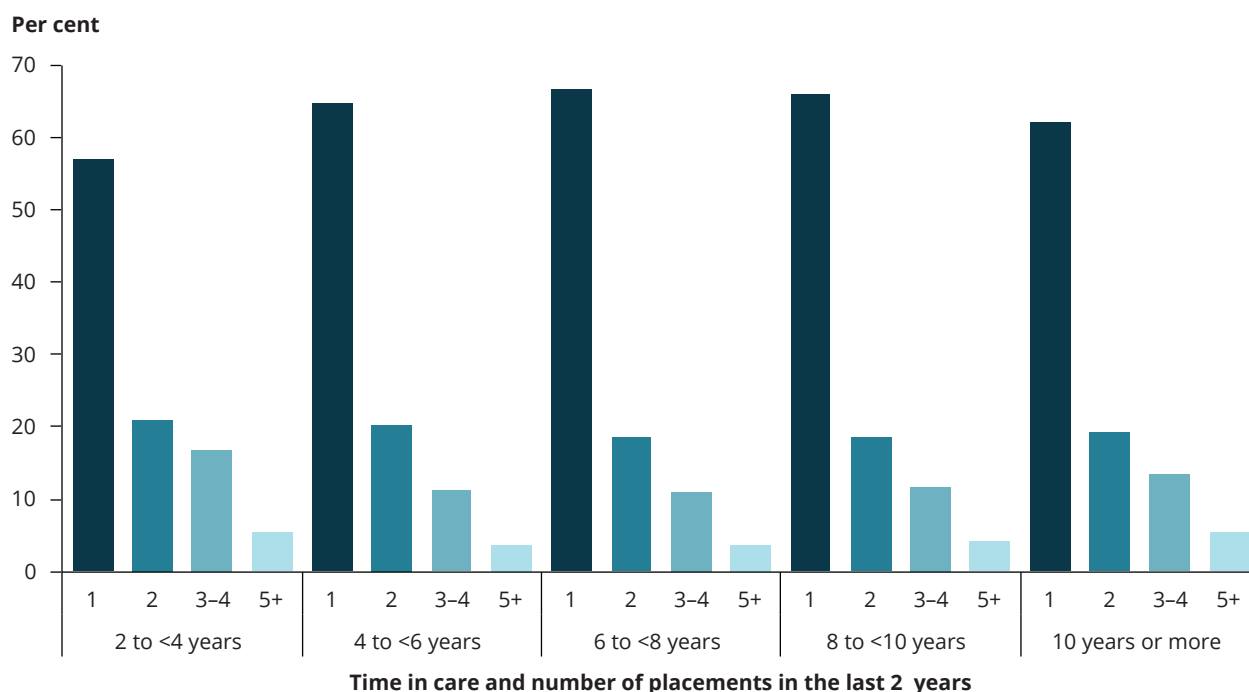
*Notes*

1. Data for New South Wales are not available in 2018–19.
2. Tasmanian data 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. 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.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S6.11.

- Regardless of the time spent in out-of-home care, the majority of children had only 1 placement in the last 2 years (Figure 6.10, Supplementary table S6.11).

**Figure 6.10: Proportion of children in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019, by time in care and number of placements for the last 2 years (per cent) (Indicator 1.7b)**

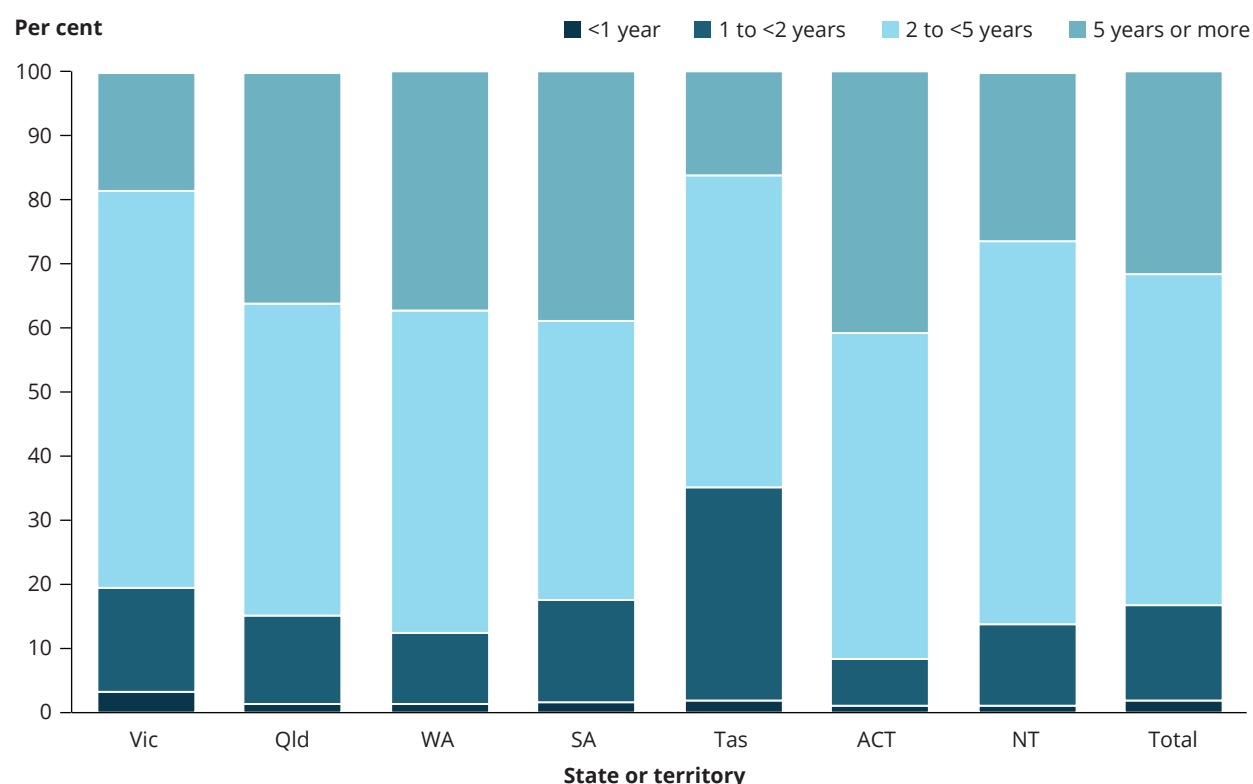


*Note:* Data are not available for New South Wales.

*Source:* Supplementary data table (online) S6.12.

- Of the children in out-of-home care placements for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019, 83% (nearly 14,000) were in the main care arrangement for 2 years or more. A further 15% were in the main care arrangement for 1 year (but less than 2 years), and 2% were in the main care arrangement for less than 1 year (see Figure 6.11 and Supplementary table S6.13).
- At the national level (excluding New South Wales), there was very little variation by Indigenous status or age in the proportion of children in out-of-home care placements for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019 (Supplementary table S6.13).

**Figure 6.11: Children in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2019, by length of main (longest) placement for the last 2 years and state or territory (per cent) (Indicator 1.7c)**



**Notes**

1. Data are not available for New South Wales
2. Tasmanian data 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. 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.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S6.13.

## Are permanency decisions timely?

According to the Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework, permanency planning should commence from the time children are admitted to out-of-home care. This is the beginning of the process for achieving a permanency outcome for children admitted to out-of-home care. During the time that a child is in out-of-home care, a child may be on interim/temporary orders and/or other arrangements before a legal permanency outcome is identified as a possibility and a decision about permanency is made.

Permanency outcomes in this context include reunifications, long-term third-party parental responsibility orders, adoptions and long-term guardianship/custody orders. This is to recognise the fact that for some children, especially those with complex needs or requiring ongoing case management, the best permanency outcome is a long-term placement in out-of-home care.

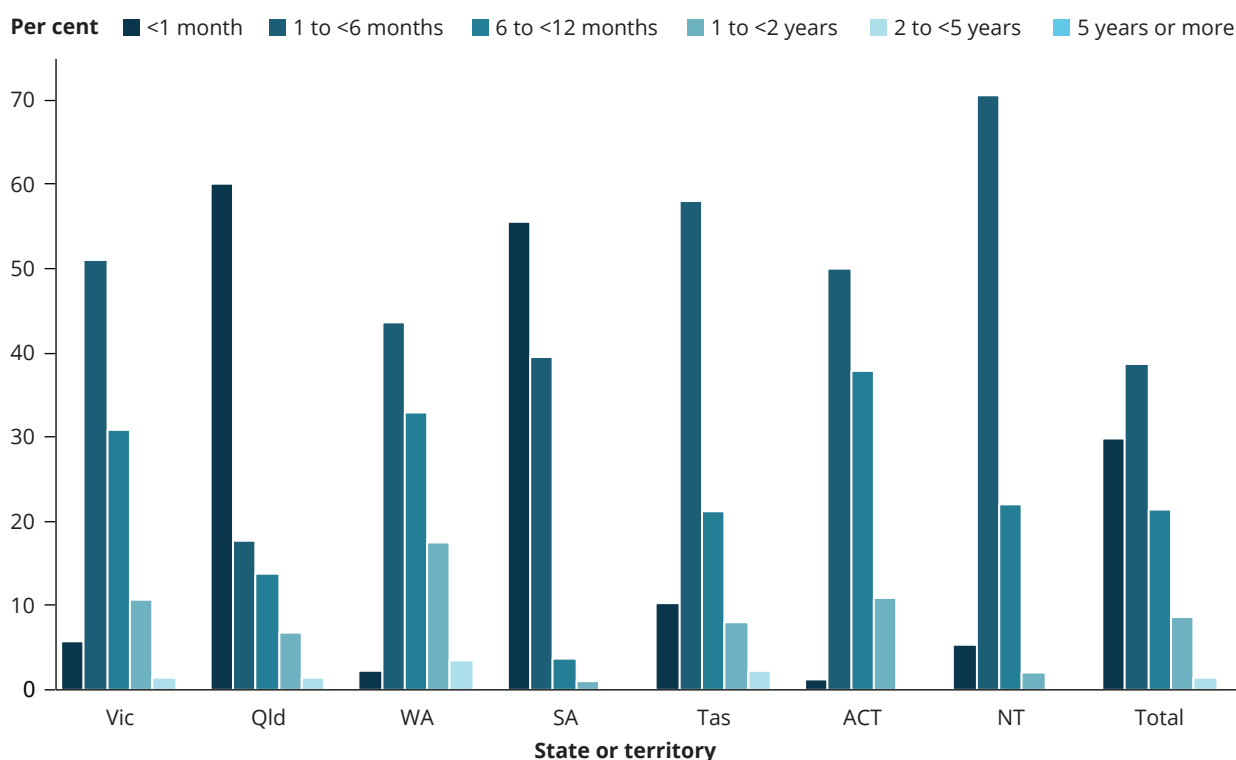


### Time from admission to out-of-home care to achieving a finalised care and protection order

### Time from admission to out-of-home care to achieving a permanency outcome

- In 2018–19, over 5,600 children (excluding New South Wales) aged 0–17 received a finalised care and protection order. In nearly all states and territories, the majority of children who achieved a finalised care and protection order in 2018–19 did so within 6 months and, nationally, 90% achieved this within 12 months (Figure 6.12, Supplementary table S6.15).
- The proportion of Indigenous children who achieved a finalised care and protection order within 12 months was 51% and the comparative figure for non-Indigenous children was 64% (Supplementary table S6.15).

**Figure 6.12: Proportion of children achieving a finalised care and protection order by time from admission to out-of-home care and state or territory, 2018–19 (per cent) (Indicator 2.1)**



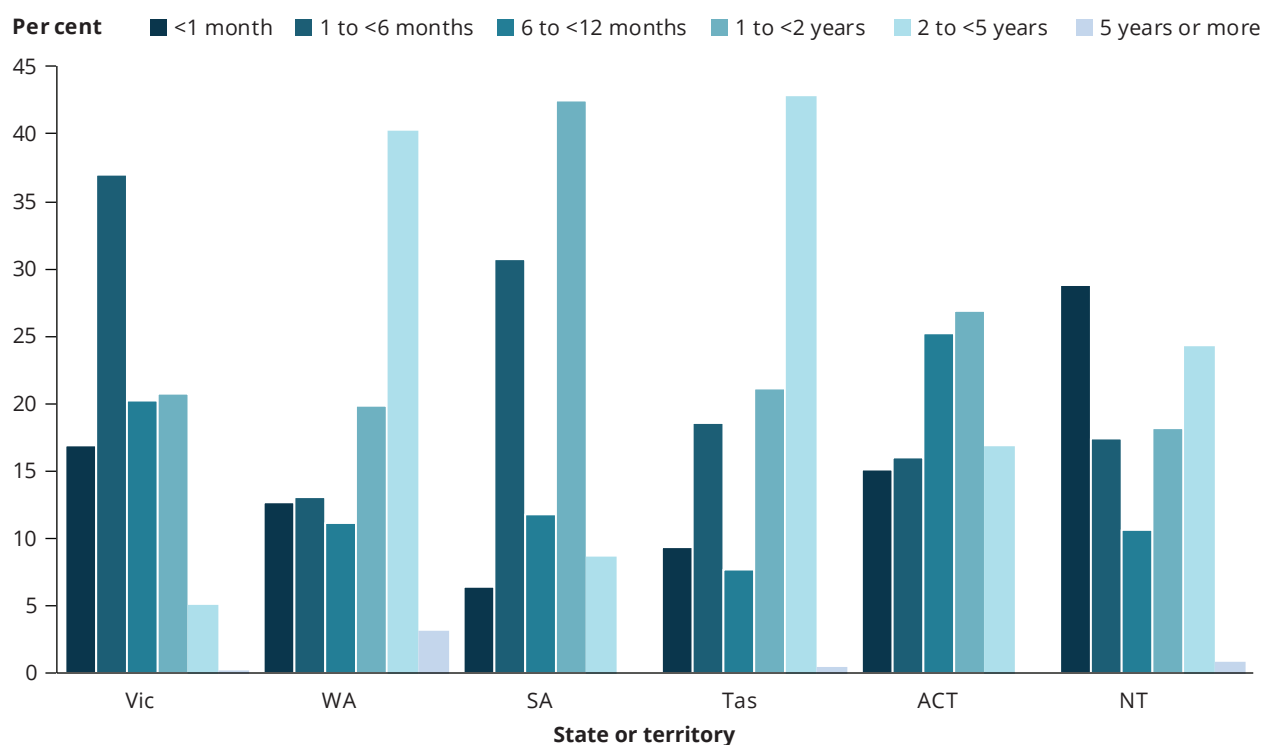
#### Notes

1. Data are not available for New South Wales.
2. Tasmanian data 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. 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.
3. Finalised care and protection order data in this figure include short-term care and protection orders and short-term third-party parental responsibility orders that are not considered permanency outcomes.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S6.14.

- Time from admission to achieving a permanency outcome for children varies considerably across jurisdictions (Figure 6.13 and Supplementary table S6.16). This is mostly due to the different mix of permanency outcomes in each jurisdictions. Reunifications tend to occur shortly after admission, whereas guardianship or third-party parental responsibility orders can occur much later. Therefore, the time to achieving a permanency outcome varies across states at least in part based on their relative proportions of reunifications versus guardianship or third-party parental responsibility orders (see Supplementary table S6.16).

**Figure 6.13: Proportion of children achieving a permanency outcome by time from admission to out-of-home care and state or territory, 2018–19 (per cent) (Indicator 2.2)**



*Notes*

1. Data are not available for New South Wales.
2. Reunification data for 2018–19 are not available for Queensland.
3. Tasmanian data 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. 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.
4. Permanency outcomes include reunifications, long-term third-party parental responsibility orders, long-term guardianship orders, and adoptions.

*Source:* Supplementary data table (online) S6.15.

## 7 Carers

### Key findings

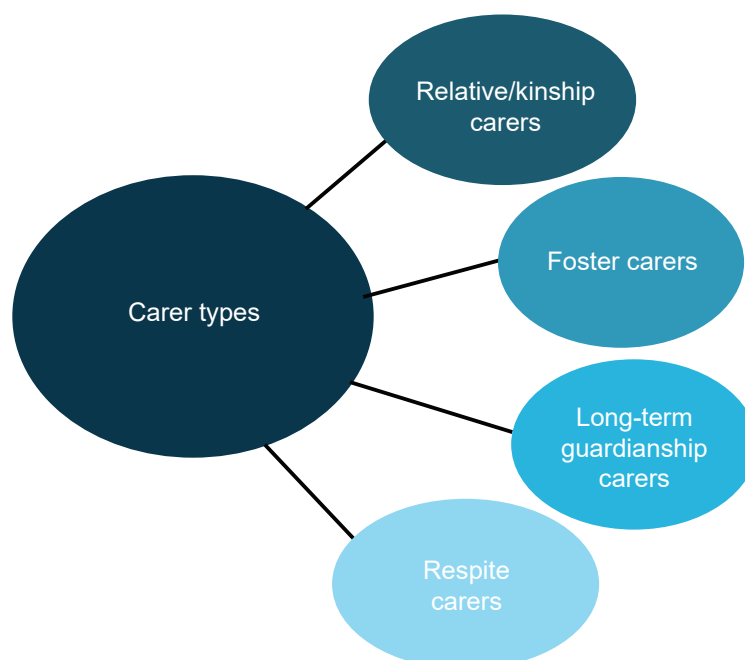
- Nationally, there was a net decrease of 230 foster carer households and a net increase of about 1,100 relative/kinship carer households in 2018–19.
- There were about 9,100 foster carer households with children placed at 30 June 2019. Of these, over half (52%) had multiple children placed with them.
- There were about 14,500 relative/kinship carer households with placements at 30 June 2019. The majority (62%) of these households had only 1 child placed with them.

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

### What types of carers are there?

In 2018–19, the vast majority (92%) 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 Figure 7.1 for an overview and Table 7.1 for further information).

**Figure 7.1: Overview of carer types**



**Table 7.1: Types of carers**

Carer type	When are children placed with these carers?	How long are children placed with these carers?
Relative/kinship carers	In situations where children are unable to live at home, but a relative, close family friend or member of the child's community is willing to care for the child.	Short- and long-term placements.
Foster carers	When children are unable to live at home or receive care from a relative. Foster carers are not related to the children they care for.	Short- and long-term placements.
Long-term guardianship carers	Children are placed with long-term guardianship carers when a care and protection order has transferred full parental responsibility to the carer.	Long-term placements, usually until the child turns 18.
Respite carers	When short-term accommodation is required for children where the intention is for the child to return to their prior residence (out-of-home care or family home).	Short-term placements, such as weekends or periods of a few weeks.

Box 7.1 outlines data limitations for reporting on carers.

#### **Box 7.1: Data limitations for carers**

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 7.2).

#### **Box 7.2: Placements provided by all carer households at 30 June 2019**

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 14,600 unique carer households with a placement at 30 June 2019. 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 (Supplementary table S7.1).

## How many children were placed with foster or relative/kinship carers?

### Number of children placed in foster carer households

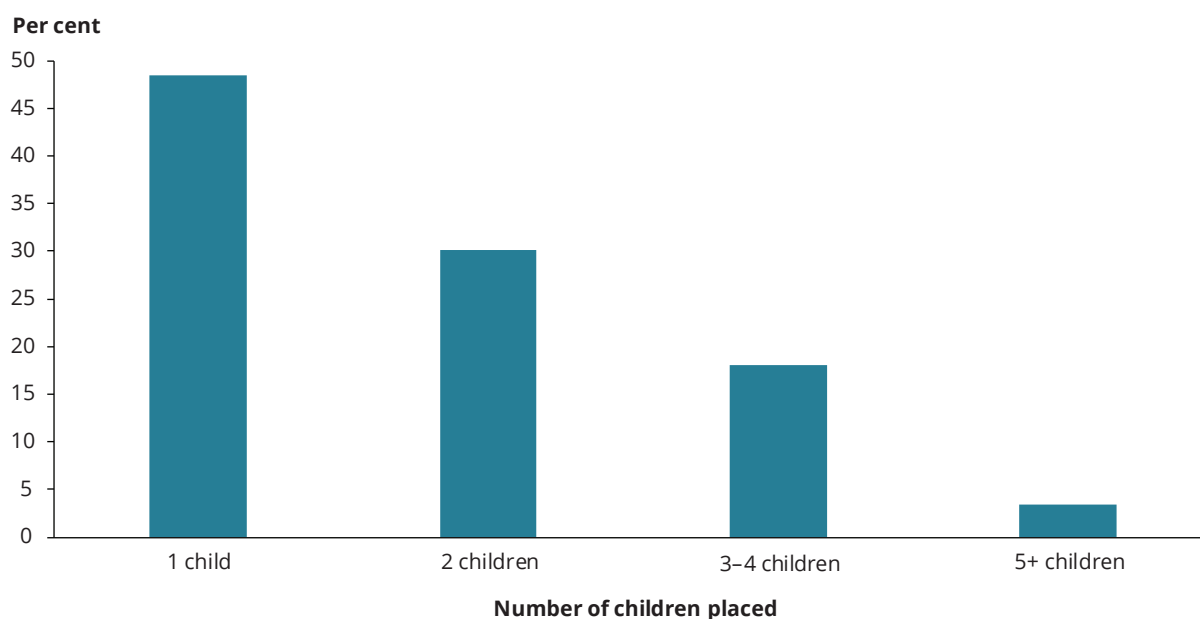
Of the approximately 9,100 foster carer households with 1 or more children placed at 30 June 2019:

- more than half (52%) had multiple children placed with them
- nearly half (48%) had 2–4 children placed with them
- 3% had 5 or more children placed with them (Supplementary table S7.2; Figure 7.2).

These findings are similar to those for 2017–18 (AIHW 2018b).

The prevalence of households with multiple child placements might reflect that, in many jurisdictions, priority is given to placing siblings together.

**Figure 7.2: Foster carer households with a placement, by number of foster children placed, 30 June 2019 (per cent)**



Source: Supplementary data table (online) S7.2.

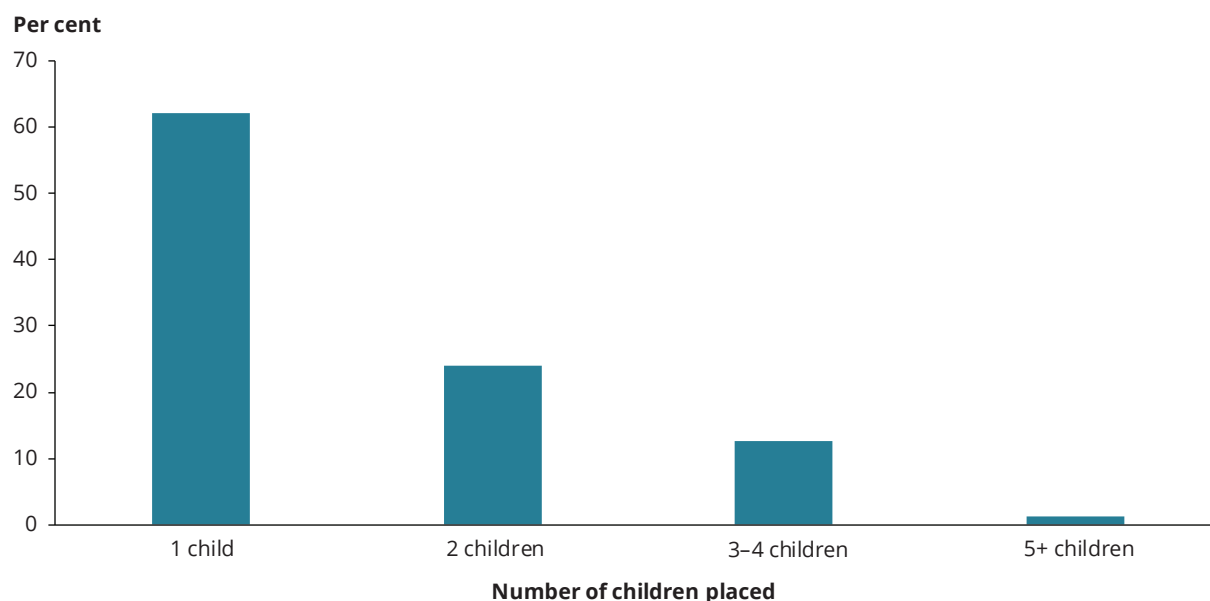
### Number of children placed in relative/kinship carer households

Of the approximately 14,500 relative/kinship carer households with 1 or more children placed at 30 June 2019:

- most (62%) had 1 child placed with them, compared with less than half (48%) of foster carer households
- 37% had 2–4 children placed with them
- 1% had 5 or more children placed with them (Supplementary table S7.3; Figure 7.3).

Overall, foster carer households were more likely to have multiple children placed with them than relative/kinship carers.

**Figure 7.3: Relative/kinship carer households with a placement, by number of children placed, 30 June 2019 (per cent)**



*Note:* Children under third-party parental responsibility orders placed with relative/kin are excluded from the table.

*Source:* Supplementary data table (online) S7.3.

## How many households commenced and exited care?

Among jurisdictions with available data (excluding New South Wales), about 1,500 households commenced foster care and about 1,700 exited foster care in 2018–19 (Table 7.2). This represents a net decrease of about 200 foster carer households.

In contrast, relative/kinship carer households saw a net increase of about 1,100 households, with 5,400 commencements and 4,300 exits in 2018–19 (Table 7.2).

This pattern is consistent with carer household commencements and exits in 2017–18 (AIHW 2019b) and reflects the difficulties in recruiting and retaining carers (COAG 2009) as well as the acknowledgement that relative and kinship carers are the fastest-growing type of carer across Australia (FaHCSIA 2012).

**Table 7.2: Households commencing and exiting care, by state or territory, 2018–19 (number)**

Households	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(c)</sup>	ACT	NT <sup>(d)</sup>	Total
Households commencing foster care	n.a.	458	365	232	214	54	36	91	<b>1,450</b>
Households exiting foster care	n.a.	721	408	254	142	75	5	75	<b>1,680</b>
Households commencing relative/kinship care	n.a.	3,261	554	814	461	123	59	143	<b>5,415</b>
Households exiting relative/kinship care	n.a.	2,787	524	508	256	140	24	106	<b>4,345</b>

(a) New South Wales implemented a new client management system in 2017–18 and some data are still unavailable for reporting. Data unavailable include households commencing and exiting care.

(b) Queensland data in this table 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. Queensland data produced from the CP NMDS based on nationally agreed specifications may not match Queensland figures published elsewhere.

(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.

(d) In 2018–19, the Northern Territory has redefined the counting methodology for kinship care. As a result, kinship care that has previously been counted under the ‘foster care’ category has been separated into foster and kinship to provide a more accurate reflection of the care provided.

#### Notes

1. Excludes respite placements.
2. From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care (see Chapter 5 for more details). Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

## 8 Intensive family support services

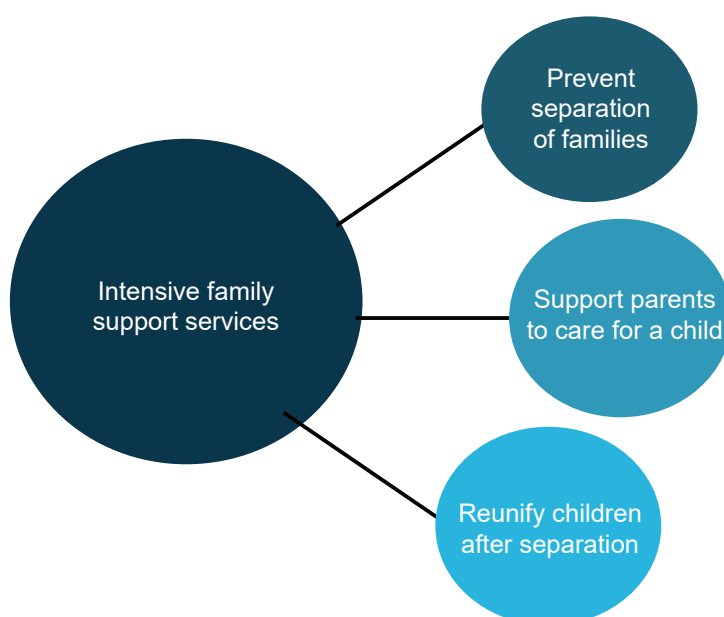
### Key findings

- 438 intensive family support service providers delivered services in 2018–19.
- Services were delivered across 372 locations.
- For jurisdictions with available data, the majority (71%) of children were living with their parents when they commenced intensive family support services.

### What is the role of intensive family support services?

Intensive family support services aim to provide support services to families with varying levels of involvement in the child protection system (Figure 8.1). Families may be referred to these services at any time once they have come into contact with the system.

**Figure 8.1: Overview of intensive family support services**





Box 8.1 describes the criteria for intensive family support services included in this report.

### **Box 8.1: 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.

## **What were the characteristics of children commencing intensive family support services?**

For jurisdictions with available data (excluding Queensland), about 28,800 children aged 0–17 commenced intensive family support services in 2018–19 (Table 8.1). Of these, 38% were aged under 5.

The great majority (71%) of children who commenced an intensive family support service were living with their parents (Supplementary table S8.1).

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 8.1: Children commencing intensive family support services, by age at commencement of service and state or territory, 2018–19 (number and per cent)**

Age group	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(c)</sup>	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>									
0–4	5,130	4,334	n.a.	431	404	279	113	210	10,901
5–9	3,155	4,017	n.a.	387	329	300	65	216	8,469
10–17	1,860	4,989	n.a.	399	331	335	86	295	8,295
Unknown	30	202	n.a.	16	0	868	0	16	1,132
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,175</b>	<b>13,452</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>1,233</b>	<b>1,064</b>	<b>1,782</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>28,797</b>
<b>Per cent</b>									
0–4	50.4	32.0	..	35.0	38.0	15.7	42.8	28.5	37.9
5–9	31.0	29.7	..	31.4	30.9	16.8	24.6	29.3	29.4
10–17	18.3	36.8	..	32.4	31.1	18.8	32.6	40.0	28.8
Unknown	0.3	1.5	..	1.3	0.0	48.7	0.0	2.2	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) New South Wales data are an estimate.

(b) Queensland data are not available due to Queensland working to improve the quality and completeness of data. Future reporting will not be comparable to previous years.

(c) 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. Not all community sector organisations provided data for the full year of 2018–19. For this reason, figures cannot be compared to the previous year. In addition, categorisation of Family Support Services as intensive rather than general may not be consistent with national definitions.

*Note:* Percentages in the table might not add to 100, due to rounding.

*Source:* AIHW Child Protection Collection 2019.

## Appendix A: State/territory trend data

**Table A1: Children in the child protection system, by state or territory, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (number and rate)**

Year	NSW <sup>(a)(b)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(c)</sup>	WA	SA <sup>(d)</sup>	Tas <sup>(e)(f)</sup>	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>									
<b>Children receiving child protection services<sup>(g)</sup></b>									
2014–15	59,092	33,430	27,163	15,909	6,309	2,560	1,703	5,814	<b>151,980</b>
2015–16	64,330	37,357	27,842	15,375	6,204	2,579	2,388	6,100	<b>162,175</b>
2016–17	66,689	40,415	28,634	15,282	6,194	2,605	2,008	6,525	<b>168,352</b>
2017–18	52,146	43,333	29,573	14,947	6,538	2,439	2,251	7,385	<b>158,612</b>
2018–19	56,398	47,271	31,596	17,481	6,996	2,565	2,323	5,521	<b>170,151</b>
<b>Children who were the subject of substantiations<sup>(g)</sup></b>									
2014–15	15,022	13,300	5,869	3,382	1,908	833	386	1,757	<b>42,457</b>
2015–16	17,282	14,154	5,621	4,198	1,641	795	449	1,574	<b>45,714</b>
2016–17	18,919	15,488	5,767	4,633	1,526	755	317	1,910	<b>49,315</b>
2017–18	n.a.	17,245	5,884	4,530	1,649	702	277	1,744	<b>32,031</b>
2018–19	14,131	18,883	6,047	4,717	1,745	578	248	1,167	<b>47,516</b>
<b>Children on care and protection orders<sup>(h)</sup></b>									
30 June 2015	18,496	10,135	9,269	4,808	3,019	1,183	747	1,073	<b>48,730</b>
30 June 2016	19,876	10,962	9,580	4,946	3,448	1,248	823	1,089	<b>51,972</b>
30 June 2017	20,453	12,354	9,716	5,138	3,686	1,316	889	1,114	<b>54,666</b>
30 June 2018	20,331	13,303	9,955	5,542	3,872	1,380	904	1,125	<b>56,412</b>
30 June 2019	20,740	14,316	10,512	5,875	4,178	1,452	890	1,110	<b>59,073</b>
<b>Children in out-of-home care<sup>(i)</sup></b>									
30 June 2015	16,843	8,567	8,448	3,954	2,838	1,061	671	1,017	<b>43,399</b>
30 June 2016	17,800	9,705	8,670	4,100	3,243	1,150	748	1,032	<b>46,448</b>
30 June 2017	17,879	10,312	8,941	4,232	3,484	1,205	803	1,059	<b>47,915</b>
30 June 2018	17,387	7,954	9,107	4,448	3,695	1,272	826	1,067	<b>45,756</b>
30 June 2019	16,884	8,490	8,125	4,754	3,797	1,104	696	1,056	<b>44,906</b>
<b>Number per 1,000</b>									
<b>Children receiving child protection services<sup>(g)</sup></b>									
2014–15	34.8	25.6	24.2	27.4	17.4	22.7	19.6	93.6	<b>28.5</b>
2015–16	37.5	27.9	24.6	26.2	17.0	23.0	27.0	97.7	<b>30.0</b>
2016–17	38.4	29.5	25.0	25.9	16.9	23.2	22.1	103.9	<b>30.7</b>
2017–18	29.7	31.1	25.5	25.1	17.8	21.7	24.3	117.8	<b>28.7</b>
2018–19	31.9	33.5	27.0	29.2	19.0	22.8	24.6	88.9	<b>30.5</b>
<b>Children who were the subject of substantiations<sup>(g)</sup></b>									
2014–15	8.8	10.2	5.2	5.8	5.3	7.4	4.4	28.3	<b>8.0</b>
2015–16	10.1	10.6	5.0	7.2	4.5	7.1	5.1	25.2	<b>8.5</b>
2016–17	10.9	11.3	5.0	7.8	4.2	6.7	3.5	30.4	<b>9.0</b>
2017–18	..	12.4	5.1	7.6	4.5	6.3	3.0	27.8	<b>8.5</b>
2018–19	8.0	13.4	5.2	7.9	4.8	5.1	2.6	18.8	<b>8.5</b>

(continued)

**Table A1 (continued): Children in the child protection system, by state or territory, 2014–15 to 2018–19 (number and rate)**

Year	NSW <sup>(a)(b)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(c)</sup>	WA	SA <sup>(d)</sup>	Tas <sup>(e)(f)</sup>	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number per 1,000</b>									
<b>Children on care and protection orders<sup>(h)</sup></b>									
30 June 2015	10.8	7.7	8.2	8.2	8.3	10.5	8.5	17.2	<b>9.1</b>
30 June 2016	11.5	8.1	8.4	8.4	9.4	11.1	9.2	17.4	<b>9.6</b>
30 June 2017	11.7	9.0	8.4	8.7	10.1	11.7	9.7	17.7	<b>9.9</b>
30 June 2018	11.6	9.5	8.5	9.3	10.6	12.3	9.7	18.0	<b>10.1</b>
30 June 2019	11.7	10.1	8.9	9.7	11.3	12.9	9.4	17.9	<b>10.5</b>
<b>Children in out-of-home care<sup>(i)</sup></b>									
30 June 2015	9.9	6.5	7.5	6.8	7.8	9.4	7.7	16.3	<b>8.1</b>
30 June 2016	10.3	7.2	7.6	7.0	8.9	10.2	8.4	16.5	<b>8.5</b>
30 June 2017	10.2	7.5	7.8	7.1	9.5	10.7	8.8	16.8	<b>8.7</b>
30 June 2018	9.9	5.7	7.8	7.4	10.1	11.3	8.8	17.0	<b>8.2</b>
30 June 2019	9.5	6.0	6.9	7.9	10.3	9.8	7.3	17.0	<b>8.0</b>

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

(b) New South Wales provided limited substantiations data in 2017–18 due to the implementation of a new client management system. Therefore, substantiations rates for 2017–18 have been calculated excluding New South Wales and should not be compared with rates in other reporting periods.

(c) Data produced from the CP NMDS based on nationally agreed specifications might not match Queensland figures published elsewhere.

(d) 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).

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

(f) Tasmanian data 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. 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.

(g) Children receiving child protection services and children in substantiations were measured in financial years (2014–15 to 2018–19). These data include unborn children and children of unknown age.

(h) 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.

(i) From 2018–19, all states and territories have adopted a national definition of out-of-home care (see Chapter 5 for more details). Data based on this nationally agreed definition may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and should not be compared with data published in previous versions of *Child protection Australia*.

#### Notes

1. Data for 'Children receiving child protection services' and 'Children who were the subject of substantiations' are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report data for notifications, investigations and substantiations. See Appendix C (online) for more information.
2. Some data may not match those published in previous *Child protection Australia* publications due to retrospective updates to data.
3. See Appendix B (online) for the method used to calculate rates.

Sources: AIHW Child Protection Collections 2014–15 to 2018–19.

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- 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
<	less than
>	greater than
n.a.	not available

# 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.

**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 Statistical Geography Standard:** Common framework defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for collection and dissemination of geographically classified statistics. The 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. For some states and territories, this includes unborn children.

**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 2018 and 30 June 2019 that was investigated, the investigation completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2019. 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 2018 and 30 June 2019. 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 2018 and 30 June 2019 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 2018 and 30 June 2019.

**investigation in process:** An investigation that began for a notification received between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019, but was not completed nor an outcome recorded by 31 August 2019.

**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.

**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.

**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 2018 and 30 June 2019 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 under 18 for which there is ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer). 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 used only 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.

**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.

**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:** A planned process of safely returning and enabling a child to remain at home with their birth parent(s), family, or former guardian after a period of time in care when it is in the child's best interests to do so, and where it will safeguard the child's long-term stability and permanency. In practice, reunification tends to be nearly exclusively with birth parents. Also known as restoration.

**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 2018 to 30 June 2019) 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 2018–19**, is part of an annual series. Supplementary population data tables (those with a prefix of S) are part of the **Child protection Australia 2018–19** release. These tables, as well as earlier editions of the report, can be downloaded free from [www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection-publications/](http://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 2019. Adoptions Australia 2018–19. Child welfare series no. 71. Cat. no. CWS 71. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2019. Australia's welfare 2019. Australia's welfare series no. 14. Cat. no. AUS 226. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2017. Children admitted to out-of-home care 2014–15. Bulletin no. 142. Cat. no. AUS 217. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2019. Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2018. Data linkage series no. 25. Cat. no. CSI 27. Canberra: AIHW.



During 2018–19, 170,200 (30 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. Over 3,700 children were reunified with family during 2018–19.

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