

2 Notifications, investigations and substantiations

Overview

Scope of the data collection

The notification, investigation and substantiation process is broadly outlined in Chapter 1. The data in this report on child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations relate to those notifications received by community services departments between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001. Only child protection matters that were notified to community services departments are included in this national collection. Notifications made to other organisations, such as the police or the non-government welfare agencies, are included only if these notifications were also referred to the community services departments.

As well as reporting on the number of notifications, investigations and substantiations, this report also includes data on the number of children in notifications, investigations and substantiations. As a child can be the subject of more than one notification, investigation or substantiation in a year, there are fewer children than there are total notifications, investigations and substantiations.

Categories used for notifications and investigations

In this report notifications are classified according to the 'type of action' taken by the community services department to respond to them. The categories used are:

- *Investigation* – the process whereby the community services department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification received between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001, and makes an assessment about the harm or degree of harm to the child and his or her protective needs. An investigation includes the interviewing or sighting of the subject child where it is practical to do so;
 - *Finalised investigation* – a notification received between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001 which was investigated and the investigation was completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2001;
 - *Investigation not finalised* – a notification received between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001 which was investigated but where the investigation was not completed and an investigation outcome was not recorded by 31 August 2001;

- *Dealt with by other means* – a notification that was responded to by means other than investigation, such as the provision of advice or referral to services; and
- *Not investigated/not dealt with by other means* – includes all other notifications, such as those where no investigation or other action was possible.

The ‘outcomes of finalised investigations’ are classified into the following categories:

- *Substantiation* – where there was reasonable cause to believe that the child has 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.
- *Child at risk* (New South Wales and Tasmania only) – used in New South Wales where it was determined that no actual harm occurred but carer/ family issues were involved, and in Tasmania where there were reasonable grounds to suspect the possibility of previous or future abuse or neglect, and further involvement of the department was considered to be warranted; and
- *Not substantiated* – where an investigation concluded that there was no reasonable cause to suspect prior, current or future abuse, neglect or harm to the child.

Definitions of other terms used in this report are in the Glossary.

Data and analysis

This section includes the national data on child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations for the 2000–01 financial year. For most tables, Australian totals have not been provided because the data from the States and Territories are not strictly comparable. The legislation, policies and procedures of each State and Territory should be taken into account when interpreting these data.

Number of notifications, investigations and substantiations

The number of child protection notifications received between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001 for each State and Territory is shown in Table 2.1. The number of notifications ranged from 40,937 in New South Wales to 315 in Tasmania.

Most notifications were subject to an investigation. The proportion of notifications that were investigated ranged from 97% in Western Australia to 36% in Victoria (Table 2.1). This broad range reflects differences in the way in which jurisdictions both define and deal with notifications and investigations. In Victoria, for example, the definition of a notification is very broad and may include family issues that are responded to without a formal investigation process. In contrast, in Western Australia and Tasmania, reports to the departments are screened prior to being classified as a notification. Only those reports where maltreatment is indicated are classified as a notification and the majority of these are subsequently investigated.

Table 2.1: Notifications, by type of action and State and Territory, 2000–01

Type of action	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld	WA ^(b)	SA	Tas	ACT	NT ^(c)
	Number							
Investigations finalised ^(d)	19,913	12,910	12,347	2,392	5,124	268	577	755
Investigations not finalised ^(e)	5,379	295	5,775	367	32	10	107	14
<i>Total investigations</i>	<i>25,292</i>	<i>13,205</i>	<i>18,122</i>	<i>2,759</i>	<i>5,156</i>	<i>278</i>	<i>684</i>	<i>769</i>
Dealt with by other means ^(f)	15,645	23,761	3,144	—	4,832	7	—	—
No investigation possible/no action ^(g)	—	—	803	92	—	30	110	782
Total notifications	40,937	36,966	22,069	2,851	9,988	315	794	1,551
	Per cent							
Investigations finalised ^(d)	49	35	56	84	51	85	73	49
Investigations not finalised ^(e)	13	1	26	13	—	3	13	1
<i>Total investigations</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>50</i>
Dealt with by other means ^(f)	38	64	14	—	48	2	—	—
No investigation possible/no action ^(g)	—	—	4	3	—	10	14	50
Total notifications	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) The data provided relate to all notifications where the primary reported issue involved harm/injury or risk.

(b) 'Notifications investigated' included 40 cases where it was not known whether there was an investigation as data had not been recorded.

(c) In the Northern Territory, notifications dealt with by other means could not be separately identified and were included in the category 'no investigation possible/no action'.

(d) An investigation is classified as finalised where it was completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2001.

(e) 'Investigation not finalised' is an investigation that was begun but not completed by 31 August 2001.

(f) Includes notifications that were responded to by means other than an investigation, such as referral to police, referral to family services or provision of advice.

(g) Includes notifications where there were no grounds for an investigation or insufficient information was available to undertake an investigation.

Outcomes of investigations

Although the outcomes of investigations varied across the States and Territories, in all jurisdictions a large proportion of investigations were not substantiated; that is, there was no reasonable cause to believe that the child was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. For example, 41% of finalised investigations in Victoria and 50% in Western Australia were not substantiated (Table 2.2).

The proportion of investigations that were substantiated ranged from 68% in Queensland to 38% in New South Wales, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. Although a relatively low proportion of investigations in New South Wales and Tasmania were substantiated, an additional 23% of investigations in New South Wales and 10% in Tasmania were classified as 'child at risk'. In New South Wales this category refers to investigations where it was determined that no actual harm occurred but carer/family issues were involved.

Table 2.2: Outcomes of finalised investigations, by State and Territory, 2000-01

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
	Number							
Substantiations	7,501	7,608	8,395	1,191	1,998	103	222	349
Child at risk	4,600 ^(a)	..	..	..	..	28	..	..
Not substantiated	7,812	5,302	3,952	1,201	3,126	137	355	406
Total finalised investigations	19,913	12,910	12,347	2,392	5,124	268	577	755
	Per cent							
Substantiations	38	59	68	50	39	38	38	46
Child at risk	23 ^(a)	..	..	..	..	10	..	..
Not substantiated	39	41	32	50	61	51	62	54
Total finalised investigations	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) In New South Wales, the category 'child at risk' refers to investigations where it was determined that no actual harm occurred but carer/family issues were involved.

Trends in notifications and substantiations

In Australia, the number of child protection notifications increased considerably over the last 5 years, rising from 91,734 in 1995-96 to 115,471 in 2000-01 (Table 2.3). Over this period the number of notifications increased in all jurisdictions except Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. The increase in the number of notifications was particularly large in New South Wales in 2000-01, which is likely to be due to the introduction of new legislation in 2000-01 which expanded the categories of risk of harm, extended the professionals and agencies mandated to report and introduced a centralised intake system; and in the Northern Territory in 1999-00 following the introduction of a new reporting system.

Table 2.3: Number of notifications, by State and Territory, 1995-96 to 2000-01

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
1995-96	28,930	29,914	15,362	3,748	8,895	2,933	1,437	515	91,734
1996-97	n.a. ^(a)	31,707	15,478 ^(b)	2,099	10,094	2,363	1,220	481	n.a. ^(a)
1997-98	31,223	33,163	17,233	2,447	11,651	1,016	1,125	710	98,568
1998-99	31,513	34,679	18,721	2,568	13,132	653	1,358	n.a. ^(c)	n.a. ^(c)
1999-00	30,398	36,805	19,057	2,645	15,181	422	1,189	1,437 ^(d)	107,134
2000-01	40,937	36,966	22,069	2,851	9,988 ^(e)	315	794	1,551	115,471

(a) Data for the 1996-97 financial year were not available from New South Wales.

(b) Data refer to the calendar year 1996, rather than the financial year.

(c) Data for the 1998-99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

(d) The number of notifications in 1999-00 in the Northern Territory was higher than in previous years due to the introduction of a new information system that enabled improved reporting of all reports received.

(e) In 2000-01 the classification of notifications in South Australia was changed to exclude reports that did not meet the criteria of reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

As well as changes in policies and practices, the increase in the number of notifications may be due to:

- an increase in the number of child protection matters that are reported: for example, due to the introduction of mandatory reporting in some jurisdictions and/or an increased awareness about child abuse and neglect in the community; and

- an increase in the number of children who require a child protection response: for example, through an increase in the incidence of child abuse and neglect, or inadequate parenting causing harm to a child.

Changes in policies and practices also led to decreases in the number of notifications in some jurisdictions. For example, the decrease in the number of notifications in South Australia between 1999–00 and 2000–01 was due to a change in the classification of reports to exclude those that did not meet the criteria of reasonable suspicion of child abuse and neglect. The decrease in numbers in Tasmania in 1997–98 and in the Australian Capital Territory in 1999–00 also followed changes in child protection policies in these jurisdictions.

The trend in the number of substantiations varied from the trend in the number of notifications. Over the last 5 years the number of substantiations in Australia decreased from 29,833 in 1995–96 to 27,367 in 2000–01 (Table 2.4). Trends varied across jurisdictions, with the numbers increasing in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, but decreasing in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

The decreases in the number of substantiations appear to be primarily due to changes in child protection policies and practices across a number of States and Territories. For example, in July 1997 Tasmania introduced a new system where reports of concerns about children and their families were distinguished from concerns about maltreatment of children. Similarly, in New South Wales in July 1996 there was a large fall in the number of substantiations following the introduction of new policies that screened out reports of concerns about children from reports of child abuse and neglect (AIHW 1998).

Table 2.4: Number of substantiations, by State and Territory, 1995–96 to 2000–01

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
1995–96	14,063	6,663	4,662	1,095	2,415	235	445	255	29,833
1996–97	n.a. ^(a)	7,034	4,895 ^(b)	982	2,527	244	376	252	n.a. ^(a)
1997–98	8,406	7,357	6,323	1,135	1,915	135	411	343	26,025
1998–99	7,540	7,251	6,373	1,215	2,114	128	442	n.a. ^(c)	n.a. ^(c)
1999–00	6,477	7,359	6,919	1,169	2,085	97	233	393	24,732
2000–01	7,501	7,608	8,395	1,191	1,998	103	222	349	27,367

(a) Data for the 1996–97 financial year were not available from New South Wales.

(b) Data refer to the calendar year 1996, rather than the financial year 1996–97.

(c) Data for the 1998–99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

Substantiations and type of abuse and neglect

Substantiations are classified into one of the following four categories depending on the main type of abuse or neglect that has occurred: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect. It is not always clear what type of abuse, neglect or harm has occurred, and how a substantiation is classified varies according to the policies and practices of the different jurisdictions. New South Wales has an additional category of ‘other’ that includes children identified as being at high risk but with no identifiable harm or injury.

In New South Wales, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, physical abuse was the most common type of substantiation. In Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia, the most common was neglect; and in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, it was emotional abuse (Figure 2.1 and Table 2.5).

These variations in the distribution of types of abuse or neglect across jurisdictions are likely to be the result of differences in what is classified as a substantiation as well as differences in

the types of incidents that are substantiated. In Western Australia and Tasmania a relatively high proportion of substantiations were classified as either 'physical abuse' or 'sexual abuse', as the child protection data from these two States include only child maltreatment cases; cases which require a family support response are dealt with and counted separately. Victoria, on the other hand, had a relatively high proportion of substantiations that were classified as 'emotional abuse', reflecting the broader range of incidents that are included in child protection notifications and substantiations. The relatively low rate of emotional abuse in New South Wales reflects the policy of classifying many of these matters as carer/family issues rather than as a substantiation of harm. The high proportion of substantiations classified as 'neglect' in Queensland reflects the policies in that State which focus on identifying the protective needs of a child and assessing whether parents have protected the child from harm or risk of harm.

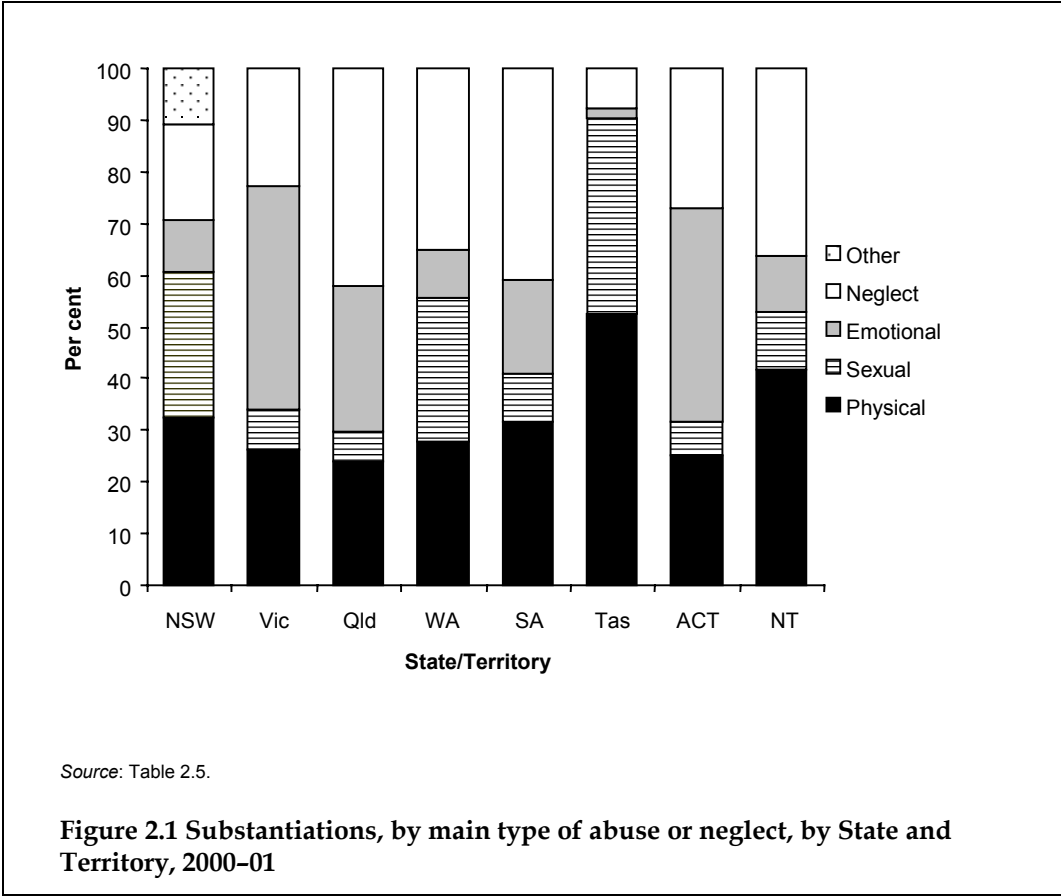


Table 2.5: Substantiations, by main type of abuse or neglect and State and Territory, 2000–01

Type of abuse or neglect substantiated	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
	Number							
Physical	2,430	1,988	1,995	329	633	54	56	145
Sexual	2,103	591	492	335	181	39	14	39
Emotional	758	3,284	2,385	108	365	2	92	39
Neglect	1,390	1,745	3,523	419	819	8	60	126
Other ^(a)	820	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total substantiations	7,501	7,608	8,395	1,191	1,998	103	222	349
	Per cent							
Physical	32	26	24	28	32	52	25	42
Sexual	28	8	6	28	9	38	6	11
Emotional	10	43	28	9	18	2	41	11
Neglect	19	23	42	35	41	8	27	36
Other ^(a)	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total substantiations	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) The category 'other' used for New South Wales comprises children identified as being at high risk but with no identifiable injury or harm.

Characteristics of children

Number of children

The number of child protection notifications and substantiations is greater than the number of children who were the subject of a notification or substantiation. This is because some children are the subject of more than one notification and/or substantiation in any one year. For example, in 2000–01 in New South Wales there were 40,937 notifications compared with 31,471 children who were the subject of a notification, and 7,501 substantiations compared with 6,621 children who were the subject of a substantiation (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Number of notifications and substantiations and number of children who were the subject of a notification and/or substantiation, by State and Territory, 2000–01

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Children in notifications	31,471	28,096	16,314	2,613	7,342	304	676	1,209
Total notifications	40,937	36,966	22,069	2,851	9,988	315	794	1,551
Children in substantiations	6,621	7,201	6,395	1,123	1,660	101	203	331
Total substantiations	7,501	7,608	8,395	1,191	1,998	103	222	349

Note: Includes children aged 0–17 years and children of unknown age.

These data indicate that a number of children across Australia were the subject of more than one substantiation during 2000–01. It is not possible to calculate the exact proportion of children who were the subject of more than one substantiation, however, as some children may be the subject of more than two substantiations in the year.

Sex and age

In 2000–01 there were more girls than boys who were the subject of a substantiation in all jurisdictions except Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, where the number of boys was slightly higher than the number of girls (Table A1.1). The higher proportion of girls is due predominantly to their over-representation in the sexual abuse category. There were almost three times as many girls as boys who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse.

In relation to age, there were larger numbers of children who were the subject of a substantiation in the younger age categories and fewer children aged 15 years and over (Table A1.2). Rates of children by age are discussed in the following section.

Rates of children in substantiations

There were significant differences across States and Territories in the rates of children who were the subject of a child protection substantiation. In 2000–01 Queensland and Victoria had the highest rates of children who were the subject of a substantiation: 7.4 per 1,000 children in Queensland and 6.6 per 1,000 in Victoria (Table 2.7). The rates of children who were the subject of a substantiation were lowest in Western Australia and Tasmania: 2.5 and 0.9 per 1,000 respectively. As noted previously, much of the variation in rates across jurisdictions is likely to be due to differences in policies and approaches to child protection matters.

Table 2.7: Rates of children aged 0–16 years who were the subject of a substantiation, per 1,000 children, by State and Territory, 1996–97 to 2000–01

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
1996–97	n.a. ^(a)	6.2	4.2 ^(b)	2.1	6.2	1.9	4.1	4.4
1997–98	5.0	5.9	5.1	2.4	4.7	1.1	4.7	5.6
1998–99	4.5	6.3	5.1	2.5	5.2	1.1	5.2	n.a. ^(c)
1999–00	3.9	6.3	5.6	2.3	5.1	0.7	2.6	6.2
2000–01	4.4	6.6	7.4	2.5	5.0	0.9	2.8	5.8

(a) Data for the 1996–97 financial year were not available from New South Wales.

(b) Data refer to the calendar year 1996, rather than the financial year 1996–97.

(c) Data for the 1998–99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

Source: 1996–97 to 1999–00 data from relevant *Child Protection Australia* publication; 2000–01 data from Table 2.9.

Trends in rates of children in substantiations

The trends in rates of children in substantiations also vary across jurisdictions. In the period from 1996–97 to 2000–01, rates of children in substantiations increased in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory and decreased in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory (Table 2.7).

Rates by age

Rates of children who were the subjects of substantiations generally decreased with age. In most jurisdictions children aged under 1 year were the most likely to be the subject of a substantiation and children aged 15–16 years were the least likely (Table 2.8). In Victoria for example, the rate for babies aged under 1 year was 9.9 per 1,000 compared with 4.9 per 1,000 for young people aged 15–16 years.

Age is one of the factors that child protection workers take into consideration when determining the time taken to respond to a notification, the type of response and whether a notification will be substantiated, with younger children being regarded as the most vulnerable. In Victoria, for example, the High Risk Infants Service Quality Initiatives Project was developed to better identify and respond to children aged under 2 years who were regarded as being at high risk of child abuse and neglect (Victorian Department of Human Services 1999). Other jurisdictions also have special procedures in place to protect younger children.

Table 2.8: Children aged 0–16 years in substantiations: rates per 1,000 children, by age and State and Territory, 2000–01

Age (years)	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
<1 year	4.6	9.9	14.0	5.2	8.8	1.6	4.3	9.0
1–4 years	4.0	7.9	8.2	2.5	5.5	1.0	2.9	5.9
5–9 years	4.6	6.6	7.6	2.5	5.8	0.7	3.3	5.6
10–14 years	4.6	5.8	7.1	2.3	4.4	0.7	2.7	6.2
15–16 years	3.5	4.9	3.4	1.3	1.7	0.1	0.7	3.2

Note: Refer to Table A1.2 for number of children.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Rates of children in substantiations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more likely to be the subject of a substantiation than other Australian children. In 2000–01 in all jurisdictions except Tasmania, the rate of Indigenous children in substantiations was higher than the rate for other children (Table 2.9). The rate ratio provides a summary measure of the relationship between the rate of Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiation compared with the rate for other children. In Victoria, the rate of Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiation was 9.5 times higher than the rate for other children and in Western Australia it was 7.6 times higher.

Table 2.9: Children aged 0–16 years who were the subjects of substantiations: number and rates per 1,000 children, by Indigenous status and State and Territory, 2000–01

State/Territory	Number of children			Rate per 1,000 children			Rate ratio Indigenous/ Other
	Indigenous	Other	Total	Indigenous	Other	Total	
New South Wales	875	5,655	6,530	16.5	3.9	4.4	4.2:1
Victoria	602	6,547	7,149	58.0	6.1	6.6	9.5:1
Queensland	680	5,690	6,370	13.1	7.0	7.4	1.9:1
Western Australia	355	760	1,115	13.6	1.8	2.5	7.6:1
South Australia	317	1,334	1,651	30.7	4.2	5.0	7.3:1
Tasmania	2	99	101	0.3	0.9	0.9	0.3:1
Australian Capital Territory	20	183	203	13.7	2.6	2.8	5.3:1
Northern Territory	153	177	330	6.7	5.2	5.8	1.3:1

Notes

- For details on the calculation of rates and the coding of Indigenous status, see Appendix 2.
- Due to the small numbers involved, children aged 17 years were not included in this table.

The reasons for the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection substantiations are complex. The report *Bringing Them Home* (National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (HREOC 1997)) examined the effect of child welfare policies on Indigenous people. It noted that some of the underlying causes of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child welfare system include:

- intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture;
- poor socioeconomic status; and
- cultural differences in child-rearing practices.

Trends in rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Since 1996–97 the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in substantiations have increased in all jurisdictions except Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory (Table 2.10). The increase in rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was particularly large in Victoria where rates rose from 38.1 per 1,000 in 1996–97 to 58.0 per 1,000 in 2000–01.

Improvements in the quality of the data on Indigenous status are one of the major issues to be considered when analysing trends for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Increases in the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system over time may be due to improvements in the quality of the data. For example, in New South Wales during 1998–99, the system for recording Indigenous status was improved and the recorded rate of Indigenous children in substantiations increased substantially.

Table 2.10: Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 years who were the subject of a substantiation, per 1,000 children, by State and Territory, 1996–97 to 2000–01

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
1996–97	n.a. ^(a)	38.1	12.6 ^(b)	9.1	25.9	2.4	17.7	6.1
1997–98	12.9	46.4	15.8	10.8	26.3	0.4	23.7	7.3
1998–99	16.8 ^(c)	n.a. ^(d)	9.9	11.6	26.8	1.1	16.2	n.a. ^(e)
1999–00	14.6	55.5	9.9	12.7	33.0	0.6	4.2	7.6
2000–01	16.5	58.0	13.1	13.6	30.7	0.3	13.7	6.7

(a) Data for the 1996–97 financial year were not available from New South Wales.

(b) Data refer to the calendar year 1996, rather than the financial year 1996–97.

(c) In 1998–99 the system for recording Indigenous status in New South Wales was improved, resulting in an increase in the number of clients who were identified as Indigenous.

(d) Victoria was unable to provide data by Indigenous status.

(e) Data for the 1998–99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

Notes

1. For details on the calculation of rates and the coding of Indigenous status, see Appendix 2.

2. Due to the small numbers involved, children aged 17 years were not included in this table.

Types of abuse and neglect

The pattern of substantiated abuse and neglect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children differs from the pattern for other children. Indigenous children were much more likely to be the subject of a substantiation for neglect than other children. For example, in South Australia 52% of Indigenous children in substantiations were the subject of a substantiation for neglect, compared with 31% of other children. In Queensland the corresponding percentages were 48% and 39% respectively (Table 2.11).

Table 2.11: Children who were the subject of a substantiation: type of abuse and/or neglect, by Indigenous status and State and Territory, 2000–01 (per cent)

Type of abuse or neglect	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Indigenous children								
Physical abuse	31	18	24	27	28	50	25	41
Sexual abuse	19	7	5	19	2	—	10	12
Emotional abuse	13	46	23	8	18	50	30	3
Neglect	26	28	48	46	52	—	35	44
Other ^(a)	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Other children								
Physical abuse	33	27	25	29	38	52	27	43
Sexual abuse	31	8	6	33	12	39	5	11
Emotional abuse	9	43	29	9	18	1	44	19
Neglect	17	22	39	30	31	8	23	28
Other ^(a)	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) The category 'other' used for New South Wales comprises children identified as being at high risk but with no identifiable injury.

Notes

1. For details on the coding of Indigenous status see Appendix 2.
2. Refer to Table A1.3 for numbers for this table.

Additional data on notifications and substantiations

Source of notifications

Child protection notifications made to community services departments come from a range of different sources. Data on the sources of notifications for finalised investigations show that the most common sources of those notifications in 2000–01 were school personnel, police and parents or guardians (Table 2.12). In New South Wales for instance, school personnel were the source of the notifications for 22% of finalised investigations and police were the source of 19%. Similarly in South Australia, school personnel were the source for 19% of finalised investigations and police 12%.

Table 2.12: Finalised investigations, by source of notification and State and Territory, 2000–01 (per cent)

Source of notification	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
	Per cent							
Subject child	1	1	3	4	3	2	1	2
Parent/guardian	11	9	16	13	11	18	9	10
Sibling	—	1	1	—	—	1	—	—
Other relative	6	7	12	10	10	5	10	8
Friend/neighbour	9	6	16	6	13	5	9	12
Medical practitioner	3	3	2	2	5	3	2	5
Other health personnel	4	5	—	—	3	7	1	2
Hospital/health centre	7	4	5	12	4	9	5	7
Social worker	7	2	4	—	7	4	2	4
School personnel	22	16	11	11	19	15	14	12
Childcare personnel	1	1	1	—	1	—	3	—
Police	19	20	13	14	12	2	10	18
Departmental officer	1	5	3	14	3	12	8	5
Non-government organisation	2	13	4	4	—	10	18	7
Anonymous	3	—	3	1	3	7	4	2
Other	3	6	6	7	8	—	4	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Notes

1. 'Other' category may include the maltreater.
2. Refer to Table A1.4 for numbers for this table.

Family type

Data on the type of family in which the child who was the subject of a substantiation was residing were available from most jurisdictions, although it is important to note that a family member with whom the child was residing may not have been the person responsible for the abuse, neglect or harm.

Compared with the distribution of family types in the Australian population, a relatively high proportion of substantiations involved children living in female-headed one-parent families and in two-parent step- or blended families, whereas a relatively low proportion of substantiations involved children living in two-parent intact families. For example, in Victoria 35% of substantiations involved children from female one-parent families, 12% involved children from two-parent step- or blended families, 5% involved children living in male sole parent families, while 34% involved children from two-parent intact families (Table 2.13). In comparison, in 1997, 16% of all Australian children lived in female one-parent families, 8% lived in two-parent step- or blended families, 2% lived in male sole parent families and 74% lived in two-parent intact families (ABS 1997).

While children of female sole parents accounted for a relatively high proportion of substantiations, they represent only a small proportion of all children in these families. In Victoria, for example, the rate of substantiations for children in female sole parent families was 16.8 per 1,000 while the rate for children in male sole parent families was 15.5 per 1,000 (Table 2.13, ABS 1997).

There are likely to be a number of reasons for the over-representation of one-parent families in substantiations. For instance, sole parents are more likely to:

- have low incomes and be financially stressed;
- suffer from social isolation; and
- have less support in their immediate family.

These are all factors that have been associated with child abuse and neglect.

Table 2.13: Substantiations, by type of family in which the child was residing, for selected States and Territories^(a), 2000–01

Family type	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
	Number						
Two parent—intact	2,413	2,039	339	466	30	50	127
Two parent—step or blended	856	1,767	214	446	24	36	45
Single parent—female	2,481	3,486	430	855	36	80	111
Single parent—male	331	474	64	108	2	18	20
Other relatives/kin	404	194	84	65	6	2	18
Foster	115	..	25	5	2	1	4
Other	488	416	15	35	3	3	7
Not stated	520	19	20	18	—	32	17
Total	7,608	8,395	1,191	1,998	103	222	349
	Per cent						
Two parent—intact	34	24	29	24	29	26	38
Two parent—step or blended	12	21	18	23	23	19	14
Single parent—female	35	42	37	43	35	42	33
Single parent—male	5	6	5	5	2	9	6
Other relatives/kin	6	2	7	3	6	1	5
Foster	2	..	2	—	2	1	1
Other	7	5	1	2	3	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) New South Wales could not provide these data.

Notes

1. For Victoria and Queensland, family of residence was categorised as where the child was living at the time of investigation. For other jurisdictions it was where the child was living when the abuse or neglect occurred.
2. Queensland does not have a category for 'foster parent'—these have been included in 'Other'.

Relationship of person believed responsible

The data on the relationship to the child of the person believed responsible for the abuse, neglect or harm to a child who was the subject of a substantiation highlight some of the differences in the approaches to child protection across jurisdictions. For example, in Queensland, the focus of the child protection system is on the identification and investigation of harm to the child and on the child's protective needs. In situations where harm has occurred and the person responsible is outside the immediate family, parents can still be seen to be responsible if they have failed to protect the child. In Queensland the natural parent was believed to be responsible in 84% of substantiations and a step-parent in a further 4% of the substantiations (Table 2.14).

In other jurisdictions, such as New South Wales, there is a greater focus on identifying the person who committed an action or who caused the harm to the child. Thus, those outside the family, such as friends or neighbours or strangers, are more likely than in Queensland to

be regarded as responsible. In New South Wales, natural parents were believed to be responsible in 57% of substantiations, friends or neighbours were believed to be responsible in 12% of substantiations and strangers (included in the 'other' category) were believed to be responsible for a small proportion of substantiations.

Table 2.14: Substantiations, by relationship to the child of person believed responsible, for selected States and Territories^(a), 2000-01

Relationship	NSW	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Number							
Natural parent	2,760	6,944	733	1,574	39	169	227
Step-parent	353	370	73	123	5	4	19
De facto step-parent	289	298	46	92	7	25	9
Sibling	178	102	18	33	2	8	8
Other relative/kin	339	222	80	98	11	1	11
Foster parent	69	140	12	—	1	2	2
Friend/neighbour	593	18	68	21	7	4	1
Other ^(b)	274	144	74	57	5	4	6
Not stated	2,646 ^(c)	157	87	—	26	5	4
Total	7,501	8,395	1,191	1,998	103	222	287
Per cent							
Natural parent	57	84	66	79	51	78	80
Step-parent	7	4	7	6	6	2	7
De facto step-parent	6	4	4	5	9	12	3
Sibling	4	1	2	2	3	4	3
Other relative/kin	7	3	7	5	14	—	4
Foster parent	1	2	1	—	1	1	1
Friend/neighbour	12	—	6	1	9	2	—
Other ^(b)	6	2	7	3	6	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) Victoria could not provide these data.

(b) This category may include other person with duty-of-care responsibility, guardians, other child, strangers and those people who have no particular relationship with the child.

(c) This category includes cases where the person believed responsible was not applicable.