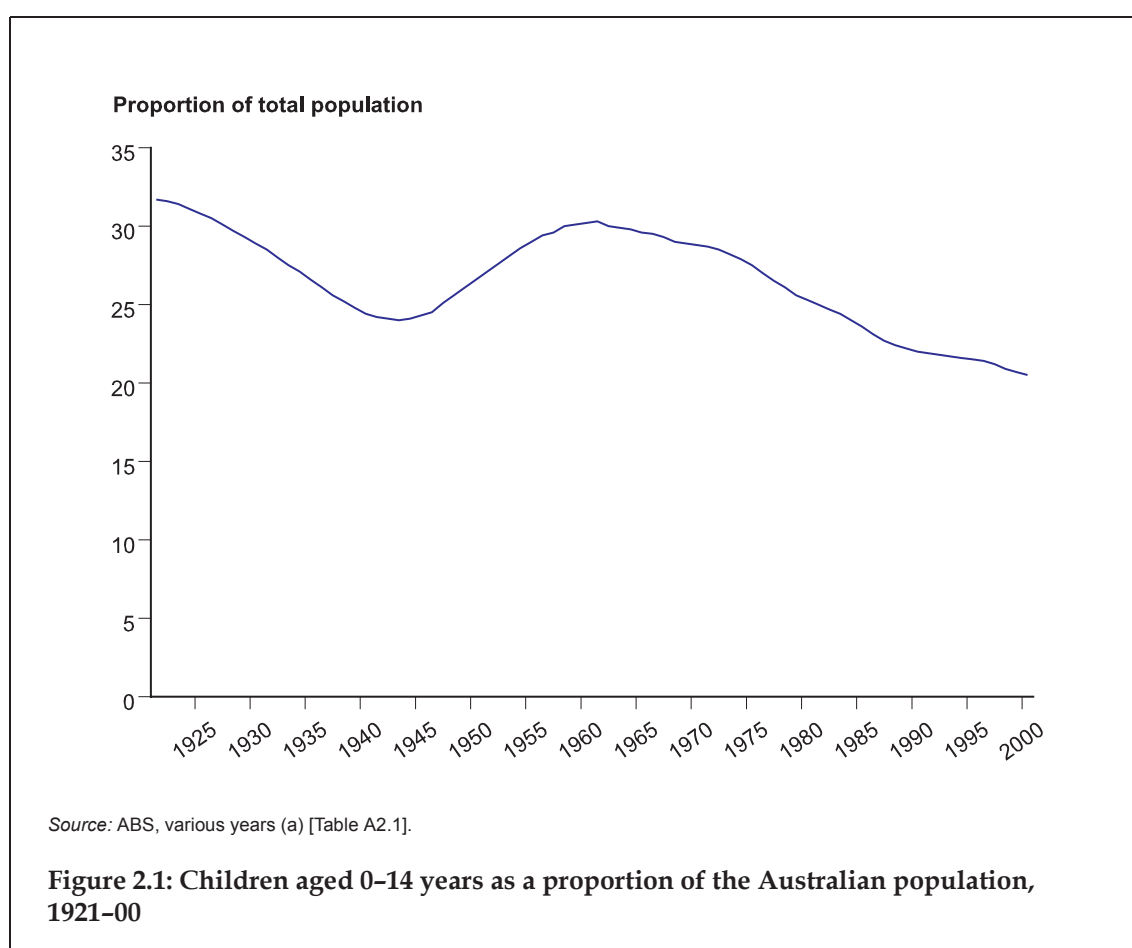


2. Population characteristics

This chapter presents demographic information about children aged 0–14 years using a number of key measures: children as a proportion of the total population, the total number of children, the ratio of children to persons of working age (15–64 years), the age structure of the child population, children in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, where children reside, and children by country of birth. Many of these factors are related to health differentials and are consequently examined throughout this report in conjunction with health status measures.

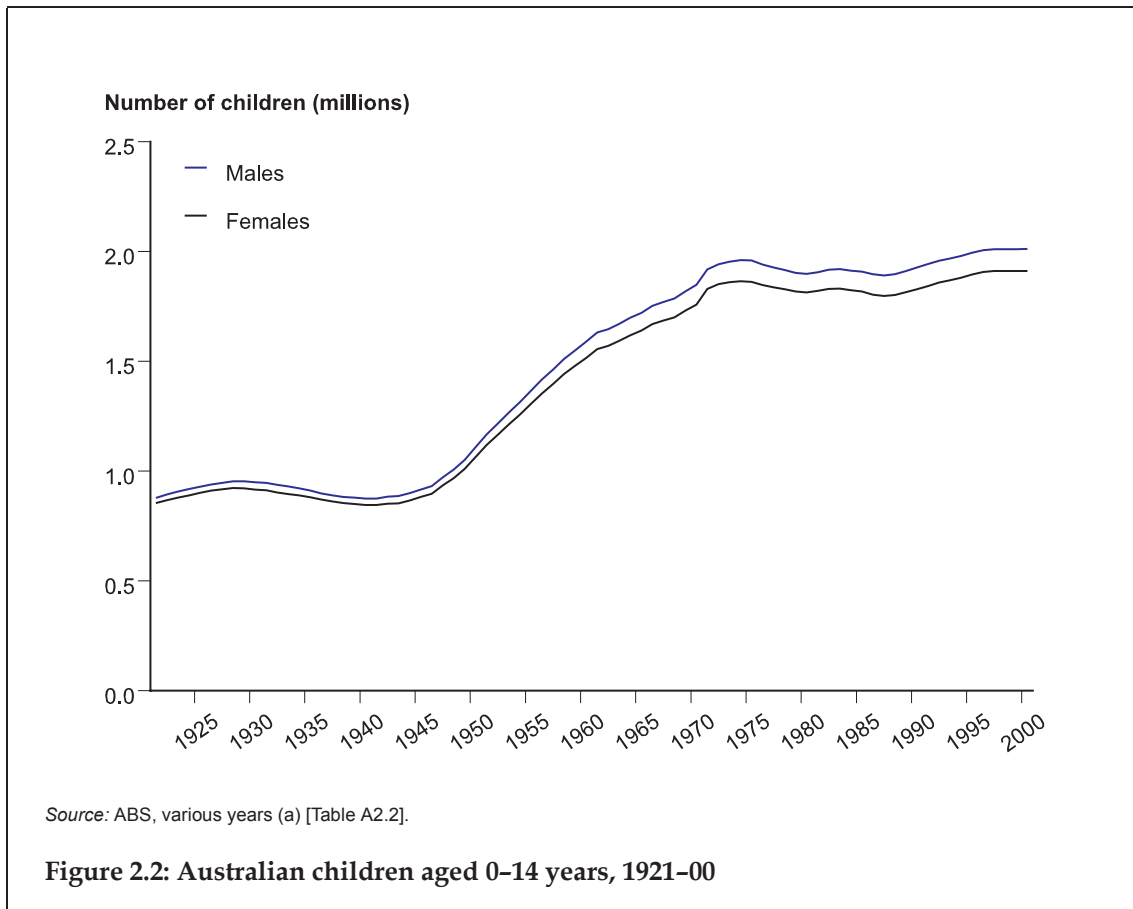
Overall, there has been a decline over time in the proportion of children in the population since 1962. The data also show that children form a higher than average proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and of the populations in rural and remote areas.

Proportion of population



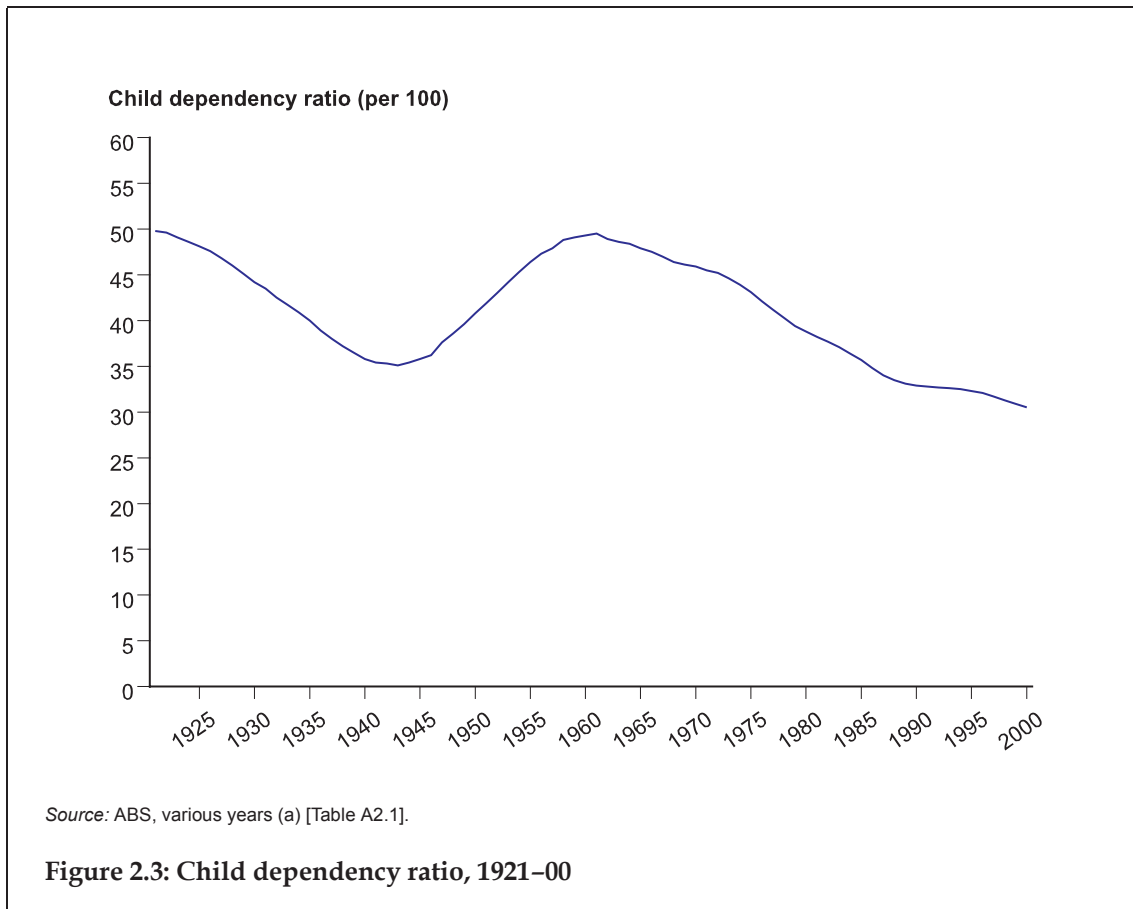
- At 30 June 2000, the total Australian population was 19,386,663, with children accounting for 21% of this total. This is the lowest proportion of the population ever.

Number of children



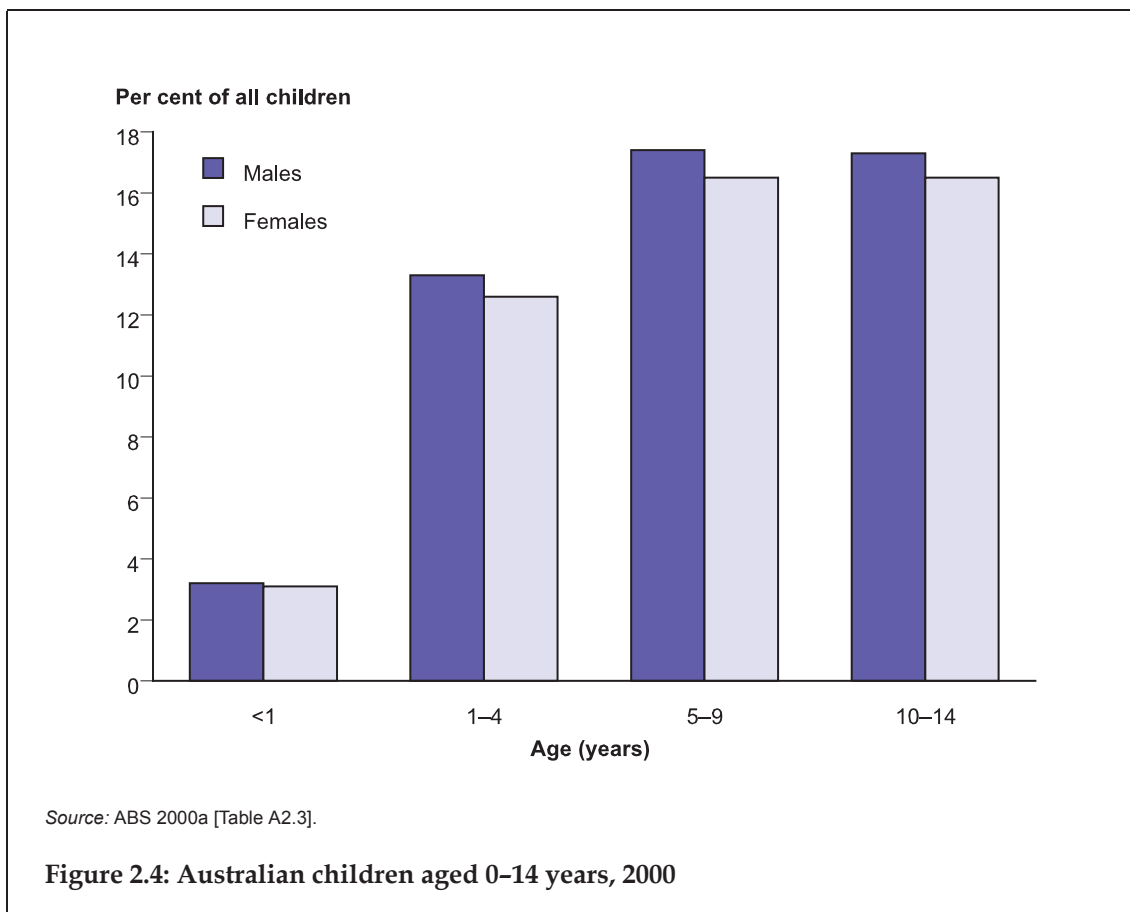
- At 30 June 2000, there were around 3.9 million children aged 0-14 years – 2.0 million boys and 1.9 million girls – living in Australia.
- The total number of children has more than doubled since 1921. Most of this increase occurred during the 'baby boom' between 1946 and 1964. In the last three decades, there has been a relatively small increase in the number of children aged 0-14 years.
- In 2000, the ratio of boys to girls was 1.05. Throughout the century there were more boys than girls aged 0-14 years, reflecting the higher number of male births. The ratio of boys to girls was 1.03 in 1921 and increased steadily to reach 1.05 in the mid-to late 1950s, and has remained relatively stable since then.

Child dependency ratio



- The child dependency ratio – the ratio of children aged 0–14 years to the working age population (15–64 years) – was 30.5 per 100 in 2000, compared with 49.8 per 100 in 1921. A more appropriate working age category may be 20–64 years, rather than 15–64 years, as children aged 15 years are usually still in school, and not working full-time. However, for the sake of comparison with previous years, the 15–64 years age group continues to be used when determining the child dependency ratio.

Age structure



- At 30 June 2000, the child population aged 0-14 years was approximately evenly divided between the three 5-year age groups: 0-4 years, 5-9 years and 10-14 years. Of children aged 0-4 years, 6% were aged under 1 year, and 26% aged 1-4 years.
- The uniform age structure of the child population also applied to both sexes.
- There has been a steady decline in the number of children aged 0-4 years in the last few years: from 1.30 million in 1994, to 1.26 million in 2000, due to lower birth rates.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

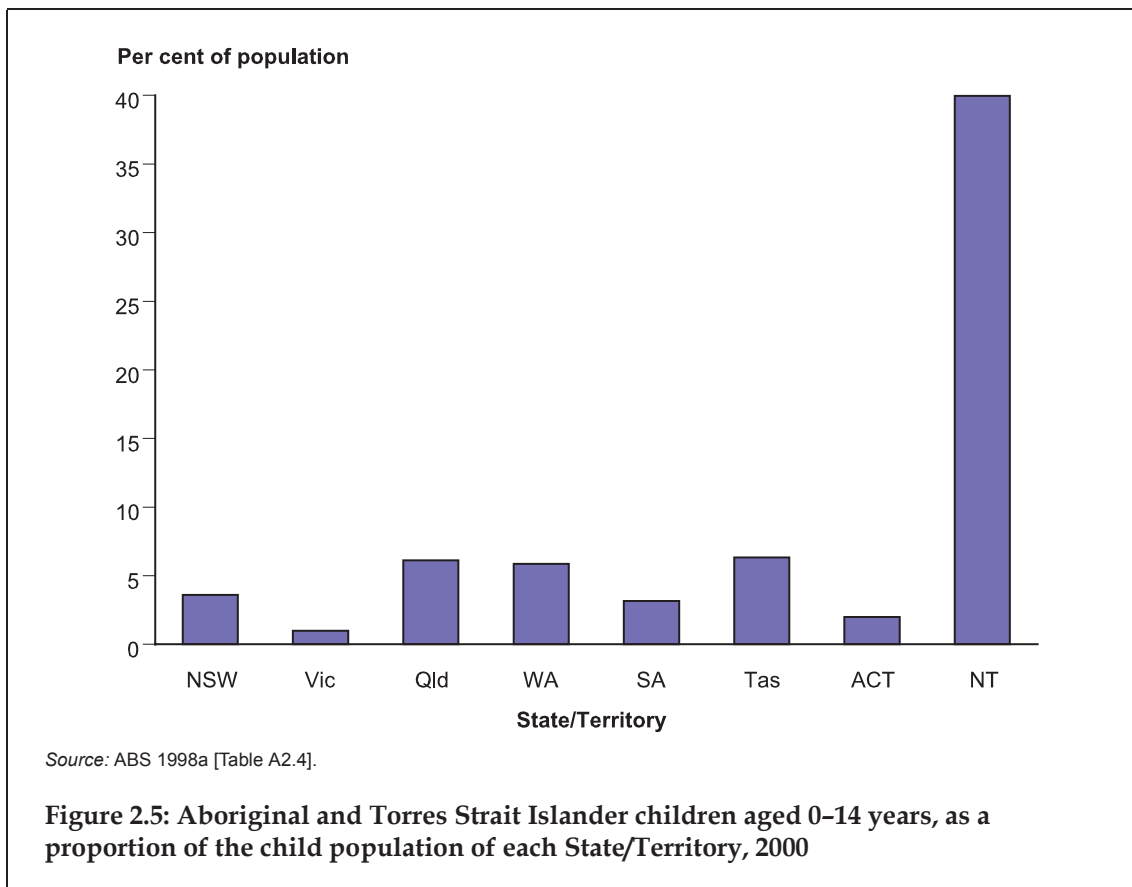
Table 2.1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–14 years, 2000

	Age (years)			
	0–4	5–9	10–14	0–14
Number of Indigenous Australian children ^(a)	57,074	55,245	50,852	163,171
Indigenous Australian children as a proportion of total Indigenous Australian population (%)	13.6	13.2	12.1	39.0
Indigenous Australian children as a proportion of the total Australian child population in each age group (%)	4.5	4.1	3.8	4.2
Child dependency ratio (per 100)	23.3	22.5	20.8	66.6

(a) These data are based on projected populations.

Source: ABS 1998a.

- At 30 June 2000, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–14 years was estimated to be around 163,000 – 4.2% of the total child population.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for 39.0% of the total estimated Indigenous population of 418,841, almost double the proportion of children in the total Australian population.
- The child dependency ratio for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 66.6 per 100 in 2000, more than double the child dependency ratio for the total population, reflecting both the higher birth rates and higher mortality of Indigenous people.



- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as a proportion of all children within each State or Territory is highest in the Northern Territory (40%). However, New South Wales has the largest number of Indigenous children (over 47,000), followed by Queensland (over 46,000) and Western Australia (over 23,000).
- Only data from Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory are used in this report when examining mortality among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Indigenous children from these States and Territories make up 61% of the total Indigenous child population.

Area of residence

State and Territory

Table 2.2: Residence area of Australian children aged 0–14 years, 2000

	Number of children	% of Australian child population	% of State/Territory population
New South Wales	1,315,566	33.5	20.4
Victoria	948,914	24.2	19.9
Queensland	753,960	19.2	21.1
Western Australia	397,705	10.1	21.1
South Australia	291,340	7.4	19.5
Tasmania	98,724	2.5	21.0
Australian Capital Territory	64,218	1.6	20.6
Northern Territory	50,850	1.3	26.0
Australia	3,922,183	100.0	20.5

Note: These data include other Australian Territories.

Source: ABS 2000a.

- At 30 June 2000, well over half of Australian children (57.7%) aged 0–14 years lived in the two largest States – New South Wales and Victoria. A third of all children lived in New South Wales. This reflects the geographic distribution of the total population.
- In all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory, children aged 0–14 years accounted for between 19.5% and 21.1% of the population. South Australia had the lowest proportion – 19.5%. In contrast, 26.0% of Northern Territory residents were under 15 years, markedly higher than for other States and Territories. This is related to the large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the Northern Territory, as the Indigenous population has a younger age structure than the total population.

Rural, remote and metropolitan areas

The RRMA classification divides Australia into areas based primarily on population size and an index of remoteness (DPIE & DSHS 1994). Within this classification, there are two metropolitan areas, three rural areas and two remote areas. The subcategories within these areas are differentiated by population size. Population information on children for each of the seven 'Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas' (the RRMA classification) is presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Residence area of Australian children aged 0–14 years, 2000

RRMA area	RRMA classification	Total children (number)	Proportion of total child population	Proportion of RRMA population	Child dependency ratio per 100
Metropolitan	Capital cities	2,401,898	61.3	19.6	28.6
	Other metropolitan centres	293,212	7.5	19.9	30.1
Rural	Large rural centres	246,017	6.3	21.6	32.9
	Small rural centres	269,257	6.9	21.8	34.5
	Other rural areas	564,608	14.4	22.6	35.6
Remote	Remote centres	57,583	1.5	25.6	37.1
	Other remote areas	87,793	2.2	26.1	39.8
Total		3,920,368	100.0	20.5	30.5

Note: These data are preliminary and total excludes other Australian Territories.

Source: AIHW, derived from ABS Statistical Local Area population estimates.

- In 2000, over two-thirds of children aged 0–14 years (68.8%) lived in metropolitan areas of Australia, the vast majority (61.3% of the total) in capital cities.
- Another 27.6% of children lived in rural areas, the largest proportion being the 'other rural areas' group (urban centres with a population <10,000).
- Less than 4% of children lived in remote areas of Australia.
- 'Other remote areas' and 'remote centres' had higher proportions of their population aged 0–14 years than rural or metropolitan centres or capital cities. This is partly due to higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in more remote areas (higher proportions of the Indigenous population are aged 0–14 years; see Table 2.1).
- The child dependency ratio was highest in the most remote areas.
- The substantially higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote areas means that the overall health status in these areas is closely linked to the health status of the Indigenous population (AIHW: Strong et al. 1998).

Place of birth

Table 2.4: Birthplace of children aged 0–14 years, 2000

Place of birth	Number	Proportion of child population
Australia	3,706,217	94.5
Asia	70,972	1.8
New Zealand and Oceania	45,408	1.2
UK/Ireland	29,138	0.7
Other Europe	25,656	0.7
Americas	14,763	0.4
North Africa and the Middle East	14,557	0.4
Other Africa	14,552	0.4
Total	3,921,263	100.00

Note: These data are preliminary.

Source: ABS 2000b.

- At 30 June 2000, 3.7 million or 94.5% of all children aged 0–14 years resident in Australia were born in Australia.
- Of the 215,046 children born overseas, the majority were born in Asia, followed by New Zealand and Oceania, and Europe (including the UK and Ireland).

