



Australian Government

Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare

# Australia's welfare 2017

# *In brief*

**AIHW**

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Australia's  
welfare  
2017

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# About *Australia's welfare 2017: in brief*

*Australia's welfare 2017: in brief* is a companion report to *Australia's welfare 2017*.

This mini report presents some of the key findings and concepts from the main report, which are drawn from a range of data sources. Full details of these data sources can be found in *Australia's welfare 2017* and the online supplementary tables <[www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/australias-welfare-2017/data](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/australias-welfare-2017/data)>.

*Australia's welfare 2017* and *Australia's welfare 2017: in brief* can be viewed and downloaded for free at <[www.aihw.gov.au/reports-statistics/health-welfare-overview/australias-welfare/overview/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-statistics/health-welfare-overview/australias-welfare/overview/)>.



*Australia's welfare 2017*

## On an average day in Australia...



**\$430 million** is spent on welfare services and support



**\$60 million** is the cost of violence against women and their children



**\$47 million** is provided in volunteer work

**5 million hours** of unpaid care are provided by informal carers

**478,000 people** work in welfare-related jobs



**100,000 people** are homeless



**46,500 children** are in out-of-home care



**5,500 young people** are under youth justice supervision



**550 people** migrate permanently to Australia



**\$200 income** is earned by the average household

**\$58 mortgage** is paid by the typical mortgaged household

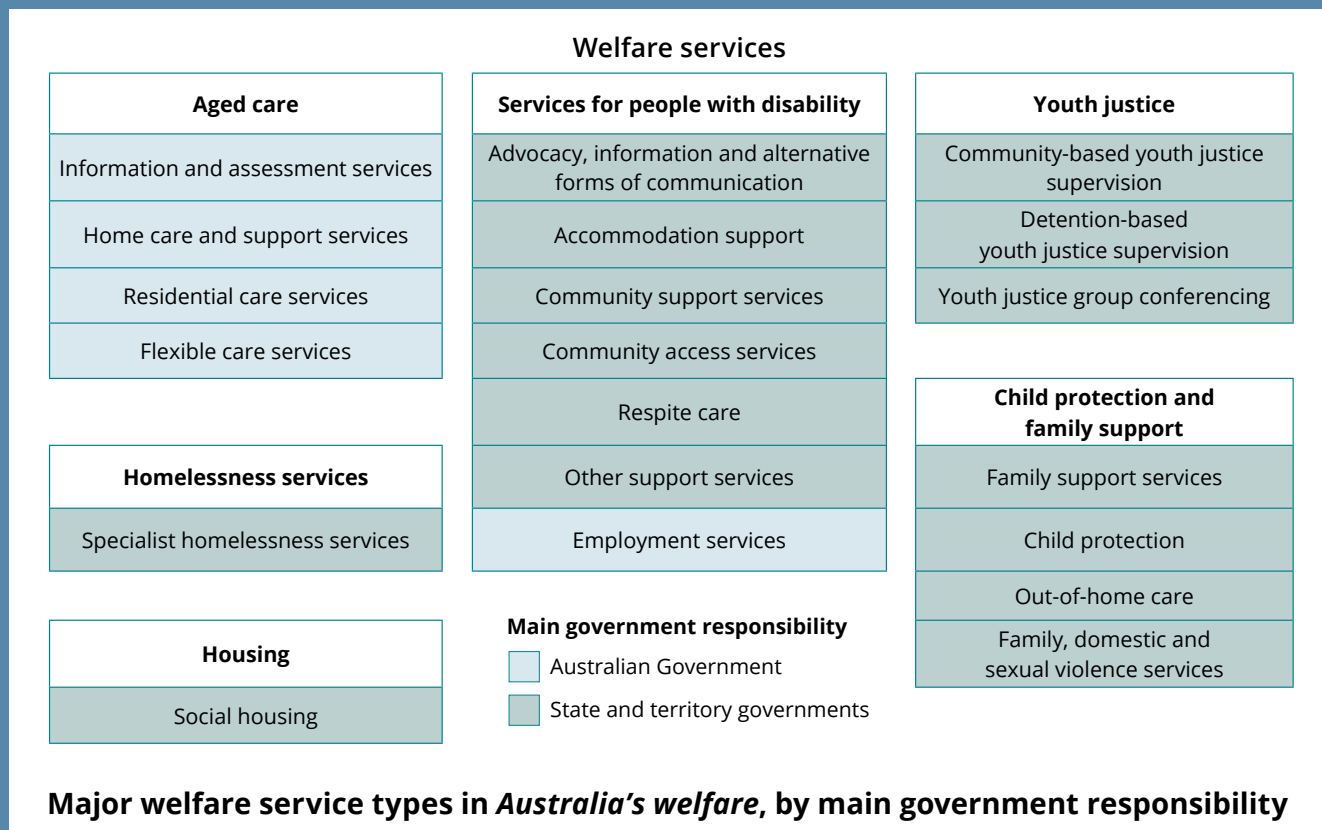
**\$48 rent** is paid by the typical rental household

# 1 Welfare in Australia

In its broadest sense, welfare refers to the wellbeing of people. Attributes linked to positive wellbeing include being secure, happy, healthy and safe.

Individual circumstances, attitudes and behaviours can all affect a person’s wellbeing, as can broader factors, such as access to education, employment and secure housing.

Many people do not need support, or their need for support may vary as their circumstances and life stage change. If support is needed, it can come from a variety of sources—families, friends and communities, or through financial support or formal services. Services may be provided by government and non-government organisations across a range of areas.

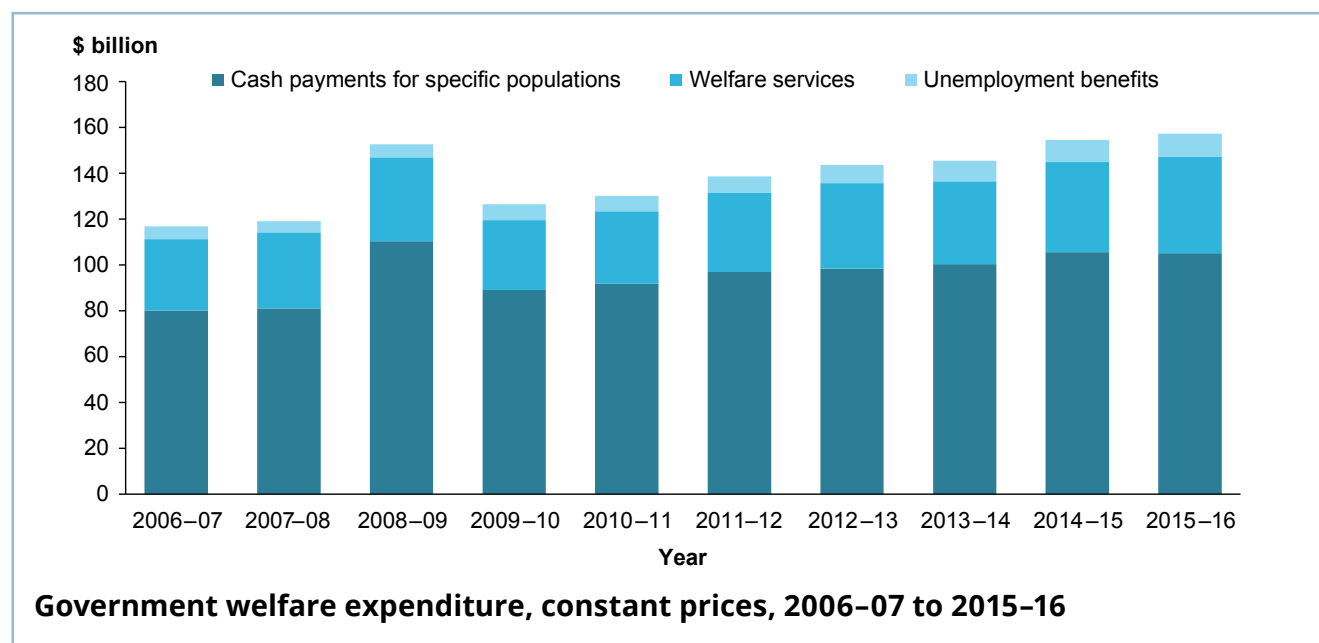


## Almost \$160 billion spent on welfare

The Australian Government and state and territory governments spent an estimated \$157 billion on welfare in 2015–16 (cash payments and welfare services only), up from \$117 billion in 2006–07. This was an average annual growth rate of 3.4%. Welfare spending also now accounts for a larger proportion of gross domestic product than before: 9.5% in 2015–16 compared with 8.6% in 2006–07.

Of the \$157 billion spent on welfare:

- 67% (\$105 billion) was cash payments for specific populations (excluding unemployment benefits)
- 27% (\$42 billion) was for welfare services
- 6.3% (\$10 billion) was cash payments for unemployment benefits.



Tax expenditure or concessions by the Australian Government for welfare amounted to \$47 billion in 2015–16 (on top of the \$157 billion in spending). Most of this (75%) was for concessions for superannuation to help people fund their retirement. Around \$4 billion (9%) was for concessions for families and children.

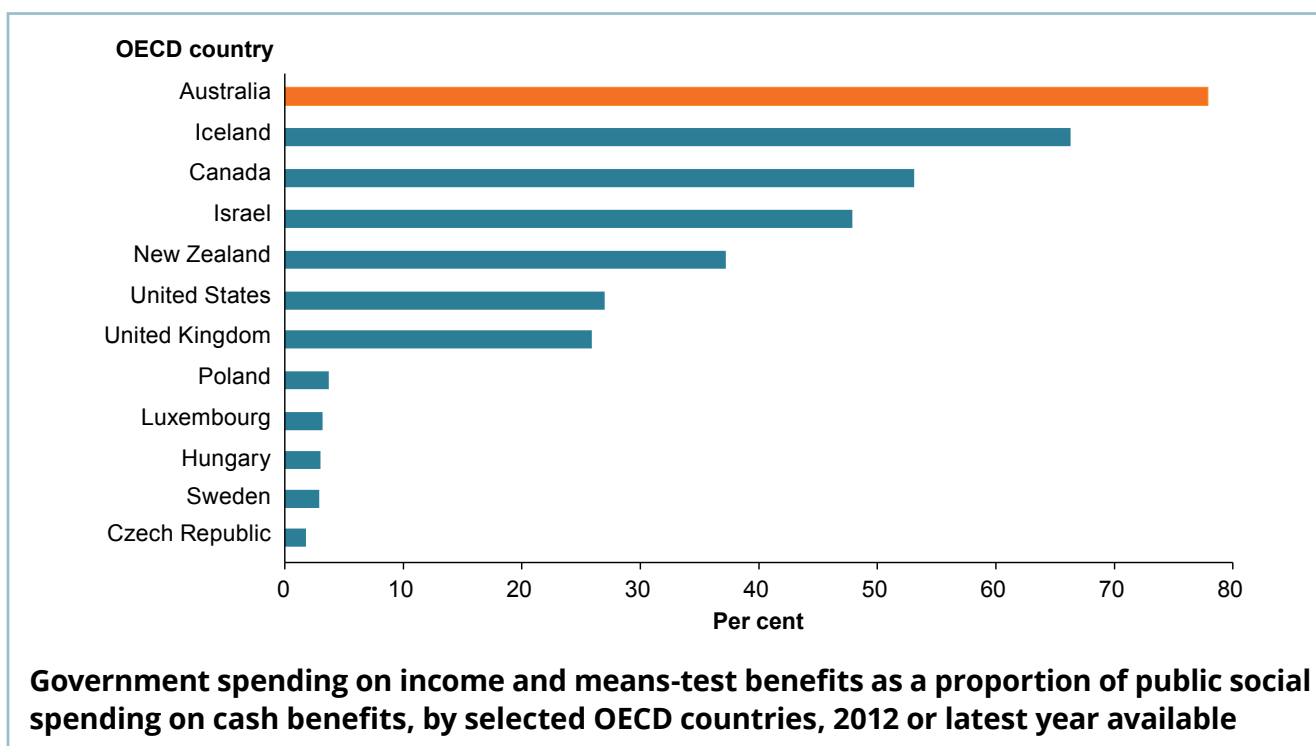
**Find out more:** Chapter 1.4 'Welfare expenditure' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.



## Australia top of OECD in means testing rates

In Australia, income support payments are subject to means testing. This process determines eligibility for benefits, and helps to ensure that resources focus on supporting people with relatively lower incomes and fewer assets.

Means testing plays a more prominent role in Australia than in other countries. In fact, we are the highest means-testing country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Around 80% of our spending on cash benefits (for example, age pensions and unemployment benefits) is determined by means testing.



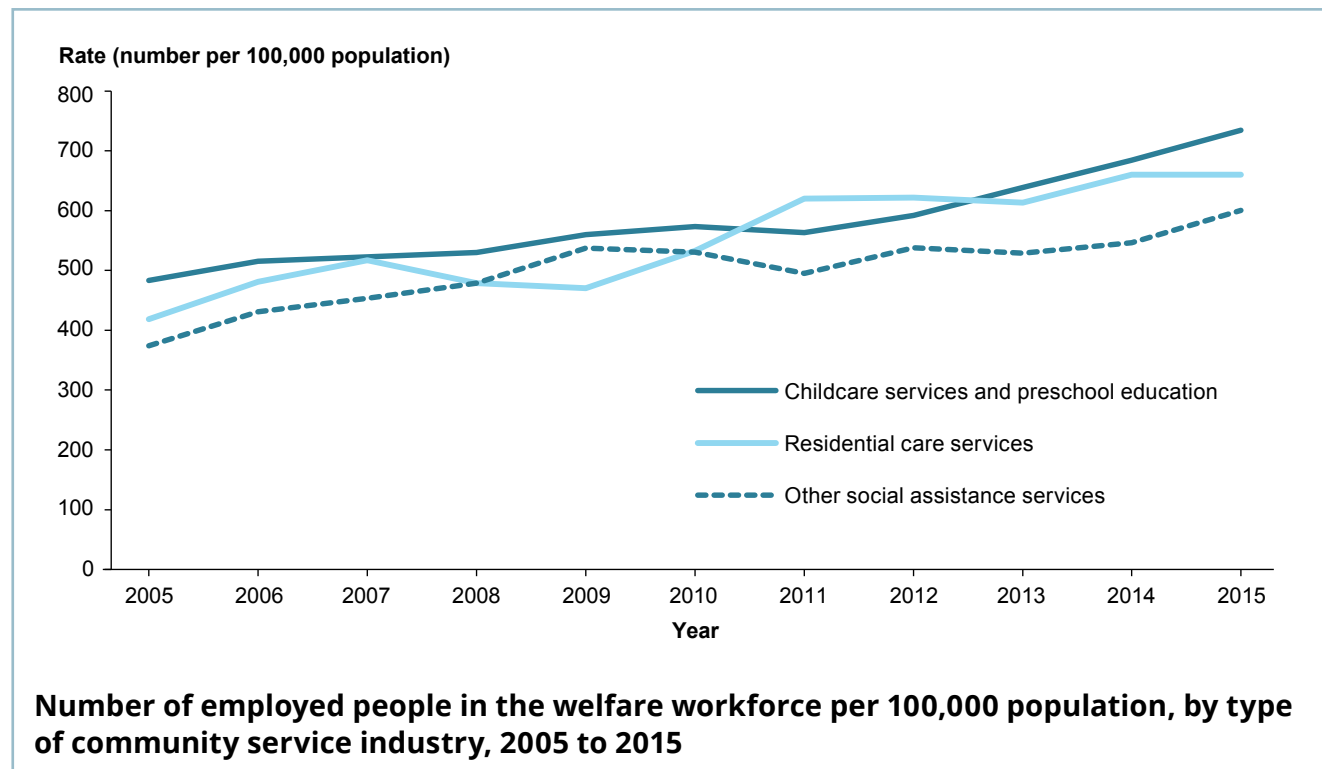
Australia targets social benefits spending to those in most need. In 2011, around 42% of social spending on cash benefits went to the lowest (or most disadvantaged) quintile of households; only 3.8% went to the highest 20% of households in Australia.

**Find out more:** Chapter 1.3 'Understanding welfare' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# A growing welfare workforce

In 2015, an estimated 478,000 people were employed in the welfare workforce—an increase of 84% since 2005.

The welfare workforce can be grouped into three categories: child care services and preschool education, residential care services, and other social assistance services. All three service areas grew between 2005 and 2015.



Two occupation groups made up more than 60% of the welfare workforce in 2015:

- 'early childhood education and care' workers—170,300 workers
- 'aged and disabled' carers—123,200 workers.









**Find out more:** Chapter 1.5 'Welfare workforce' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

## Some Australians face persistent disadvantage

About 4.4% (1 in 23) of Australians are estimated to face deep and persistent disadvantage. Some groups in the community face rates of disadvantage that are much higher than the national average. For example, almost 1 in 4 people living in public housing experience deep and persistent disadvantage, as do 1 in 6 who depend on income support, and 1 in 8 who are unemployed.

An estimated 17% of Australian children aged under 15 were living in poverty in 2014—up from 15% a decade earlier.

### Estimates of deep and persistent disadvantage in selected population groups, Australians aged 15 and over, using the Social Exclusion Monitor, 2001 to 2010

	Group	Facing deep and persistent disadvantage (%)
	Living in public housing	23.6
	Dependent on income support	15.3
	Unemployed	11.5
	Lone parents	11.3
	With a long-term health condition or disability	11.2
	Indigenous Australians	10.8
	Highest educational attainment Year 11 or below	9.3
	All Australians	4.4

**Find out more:** Chapter 1.6 'Persistent disadvantage in Australia: extent, complexity and some key implications' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

## 2 Children, youth and families

How a family functions, and its socio-demographic characteristics, can play a critical role in the health and wellbeing of all its members. For children and youth, their family relationships and interactions—along with how they perform at school, their social interactions, and whether they are safe from harm—are among a multitude of factors that can have lifelong effects.

The majority of Australia's 9.4 million households are family households. In 2017 it is estimated that:



**71%**

(6.7 million)

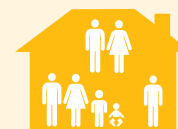
are family households



**25%**

(2.3 million)

are single-person households



**4%**

(403,000)

are group households

In 2016, the majority of families were couple families (84%) and, of these, 44% had dependants living with them. Of the nearly 949,000 single-parent families, 65% had dependants living with them.

In 2017 there are 4.7 million children aged 0–14 in Australia, and a further 3.2 million young people aged 15–24.

## More young children in formal care; fewer cared for by relatives

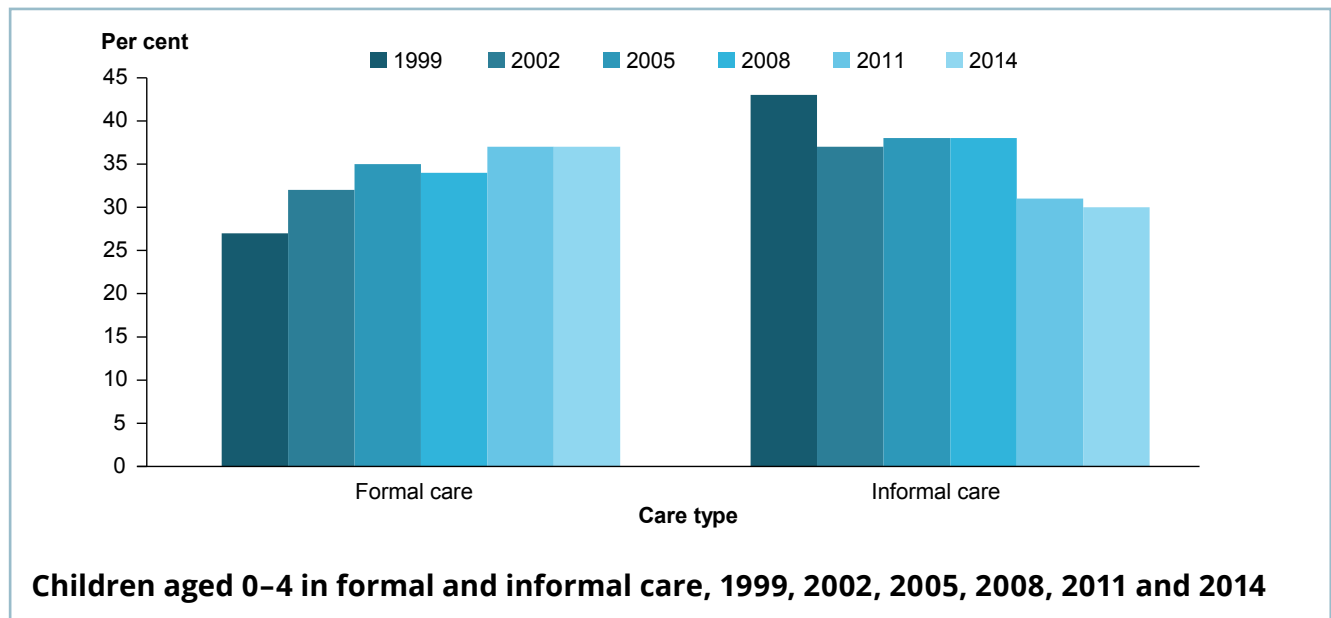
In 2014, nearly half (48%, or 1.8 million) of children aged 0–12 attended formal care (for example, long day care, or before- or after-school care) or informal care (for example, care provided by relatives or babysitters).

Since 1999, more children attend formal care, and fewer are being cared for by relatives. For example, between 1999 and 2014, the proportion of children aged 0–4 who:

- attended formal child care grew, from 27% to 37%
- received informal care fell, from 43% to 30%.

The proportion of children aged 0–4 attending long day care has almost doubled since 1999, rising from 18% in 1999 to 31% in 2014.

Grandparents are the most common source of informal child care; 23% of children aged 0–4 were cared for by their grandparents in 2014.

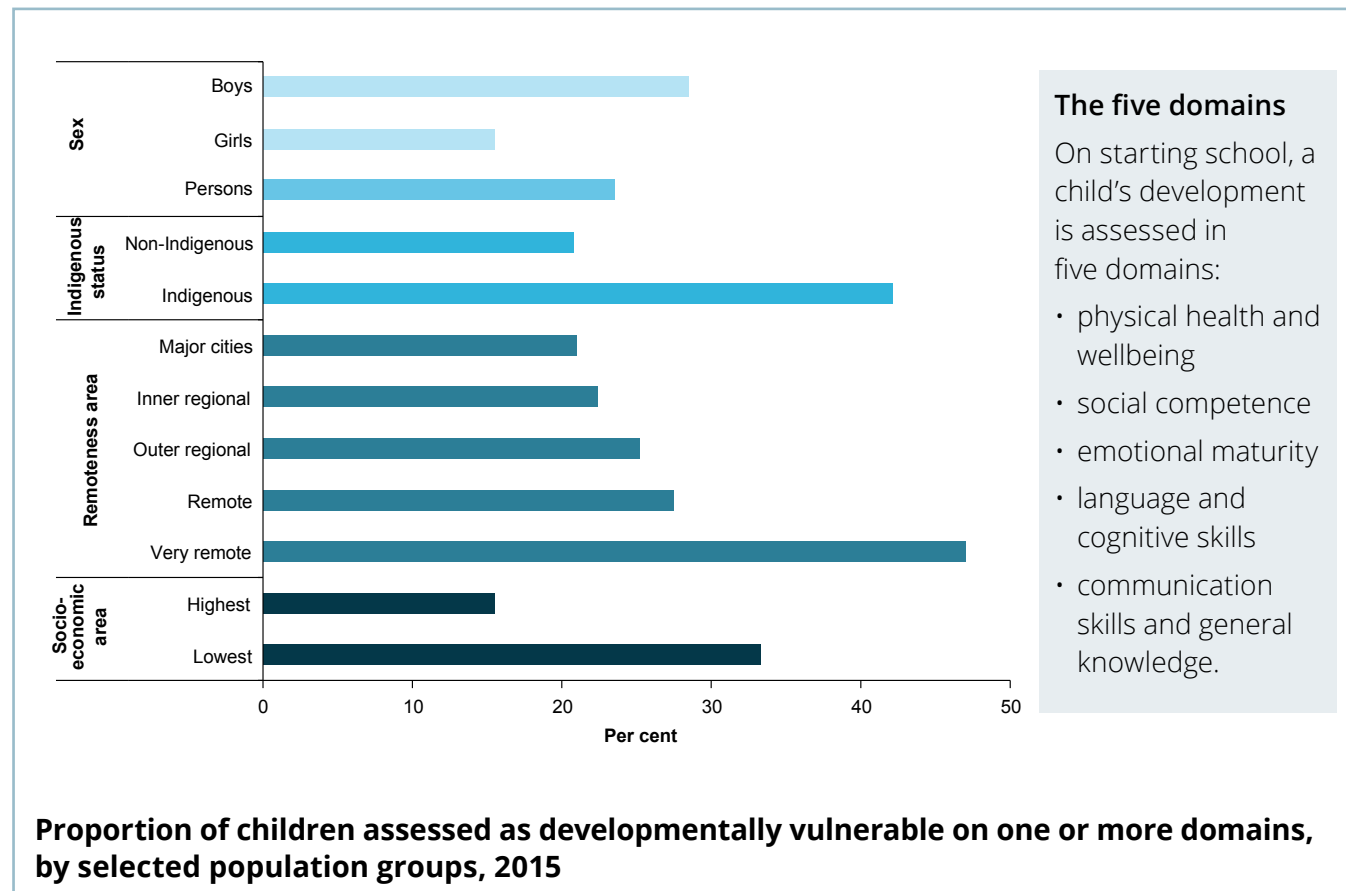


**Find out more:** Chapter 2.1 'Children in child care and preschool programs' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# 1 in 5 children developmentally vulnerable

On starting primary school, about 4 in 5 children are considered to be 'on track' developmentally, with about 1 in 5 (22%) developmentally vulnerable on one or more of five specific areas (domains).

Children were more likely to be developmentally vulnerable if they lived in *Very remote* or low socioeconomic areas.



**Find out more:** Chapter 2.2 'Transition to primary school' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

## 31,000 children in long-term out-of-home care

In 2015–16, more than 162,000 Australian children aged 0–17 received child protection services. Out-of-home care is one of the main services offered under Australia’s child protection system. More than 55,600 children had an out-of-home care placement in 2015–16—an increase of 11% (5,300 children) from 2012–13.

Almost 31,000 children had been in out-of-home care for 2 years or more because they were unable to live safely with their parents. Of these:



most (70%) were aged between 5 and 14, with a median age of 10



more than one-third (36%) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children



94% were living in home-based out-of-home care, including 43% with relatives/kin



almost three-quarters (74%) had experienced more than one placement in their most recent episode of care.

For some children unable to return home, adoption can provide long-term care. Seventy children were adopted from out-of-home care in 2015–16 (25% of the 278 adoptions that year).

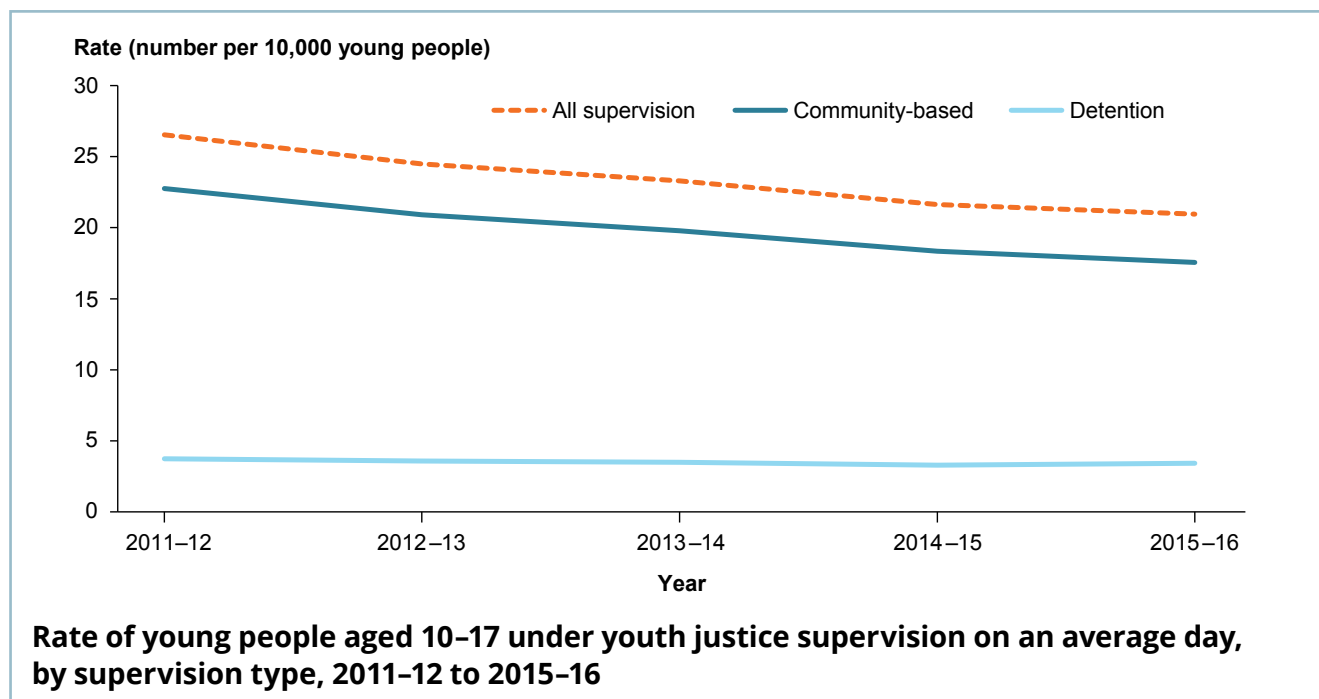
**Find out more:** Chapter 2.3 ‘Adoptions’, Chapter 2.4 ‘Child protection’ and Chapter 2.5 ‘A stable and secure home for children in out-of-home care’ in *Australia’s welfare 2017*.

# Fewer young people under youth justice supervision

In 2015–16:

- 5,482 young people (aged 10 and older) were under supervision on an average day
- most young people under supervision were supervised in the community (84%)
- young people who were supervised by a youth justice agency spent 182 days or about 6 months, on average, under supervision.

Between 2011–12 and 2015–16, the number of young people aged 10 and older who were under supervision on an average day fell by 21% (from 6,959 to 5,482). As a rate, this was a decline from 27 to 21 per 10,000 people aged 10–17.



Most young people who receive a supervised youth justice sentence serve only one sentence, and do not return; 61% of young people under sentenced youth justice supervision from 2000–01 to 2015–16 and born between 1990–91 and 1997–98 received only one supervised sentence before the age of 18.

**Find out more:** Chapter 2.6 'Youth justice' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

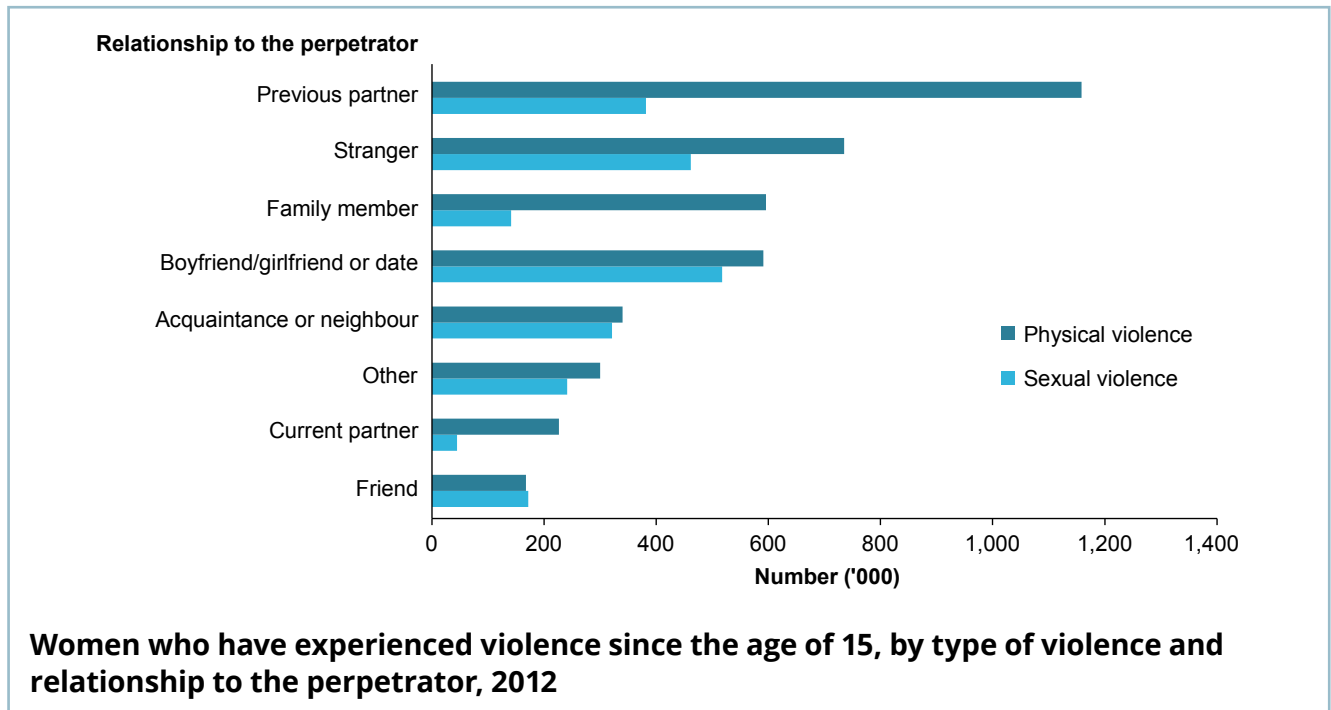


# 1 in 6 women victims of domestic violence

Family, domestic and sexual violence is a major public health and welfare issue in Australia and globally. The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia was estimated at \$22 billion in 2015–16.

- One in 6 (17%) Australian women have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former cohabiting partner since the age of 15. This compares with around 1 in 19 (5.3%) men.
- In three-fifths (59%) of hospitalisations of females for assault in 2013–14, the perpetrator was a spouse or domestic partner (where the perpetrator was specified).
- Women were the victims in 75% of all intimate partner homicides that occurred between 2002–03 and 2011–12.

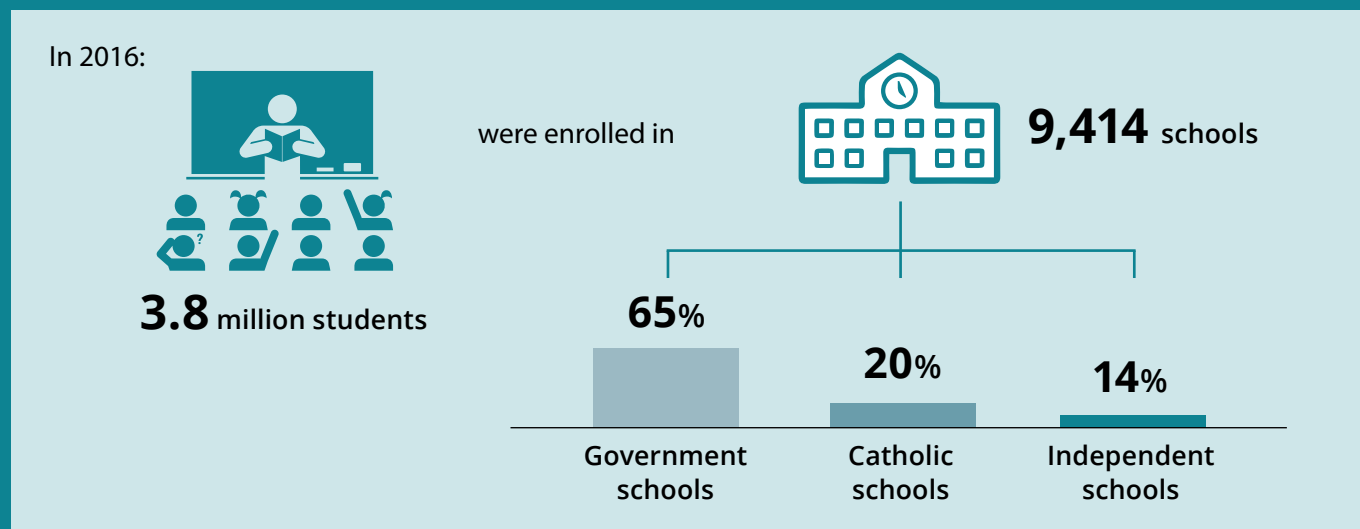
For female victims of physical violence (an estimated 1.2 million women, or 13% of all women), the most common perpetrator was a previous partner; for victims of sexual violence (estimated to be more than half a million women, or 6% of all women), it was most commonly a boyfriend/girlfriend or a date.



**Find out more:** Chapter 2.7 'Family, domestic and sexual violence' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# 3 Education in Australia

Participating and engaging in learning and formal education from an early age are central to a child's development. Completing schooling and higher levels of education (particularly obtaining tertiary level qualifications) offers more employment opportunities and better outcomes, such as higher relative earnings. Low school attainment and poor engagement with school can lead to poorer outcomes in life, including unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.



Formal education starts at age 5 or 6 in Australia and is compulsory until completion of Year 10. Young people must then participate in full-time education, employment or training (or a combination) until age 17. There were 172 registered higher education providers in Australia as at October 2015, 40 of which were universities. In 2015, there were 4,277 vocational education and training providers (including Australian providers operating overseas), enrolling about 4.5 million students. Around 278,500 apprentices and trainees were in training as at September 2016.

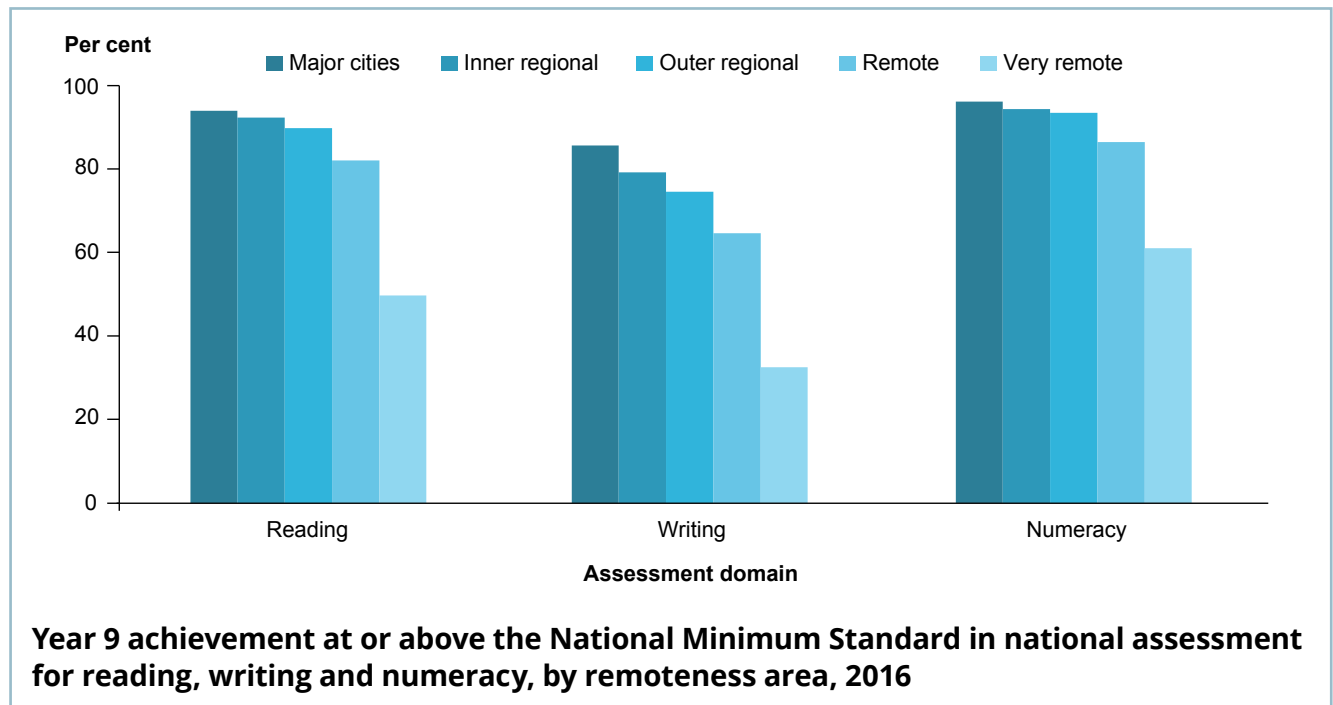
As at May 2016, 2.2 million people aged 15–64 were enrolled in formal study towards a non-school qualification—1.3 million (59%) of these at a higher education institution such as a university. Management and commerce (24%) and society and culture (21%) were the most common fields of non-school study.

## National literacy and numeracy results steady, but international test results declining

Results in national assessments for literacy and numeracy testing in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 have largely plateaued for students since 2008. However, reading results did improve for Years 3 and 5 in 2016, particularly for Indigenous students.

Lower levels of achievement persist for disadvantaged groups of students; for example, for students in *Very remote* areas, particularly for writing (see Year 9 results in the figure here).

Programme for International Student Assessment testing showed that, in 2015, Australian students performed significantly below students in 9 other countries for science, 11 countries for reading and 19 for mathematics. While Australia's average score in these 3 areas was higher than the average for 35 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in 2015, its results are significantly lower than those achieved in 2012.



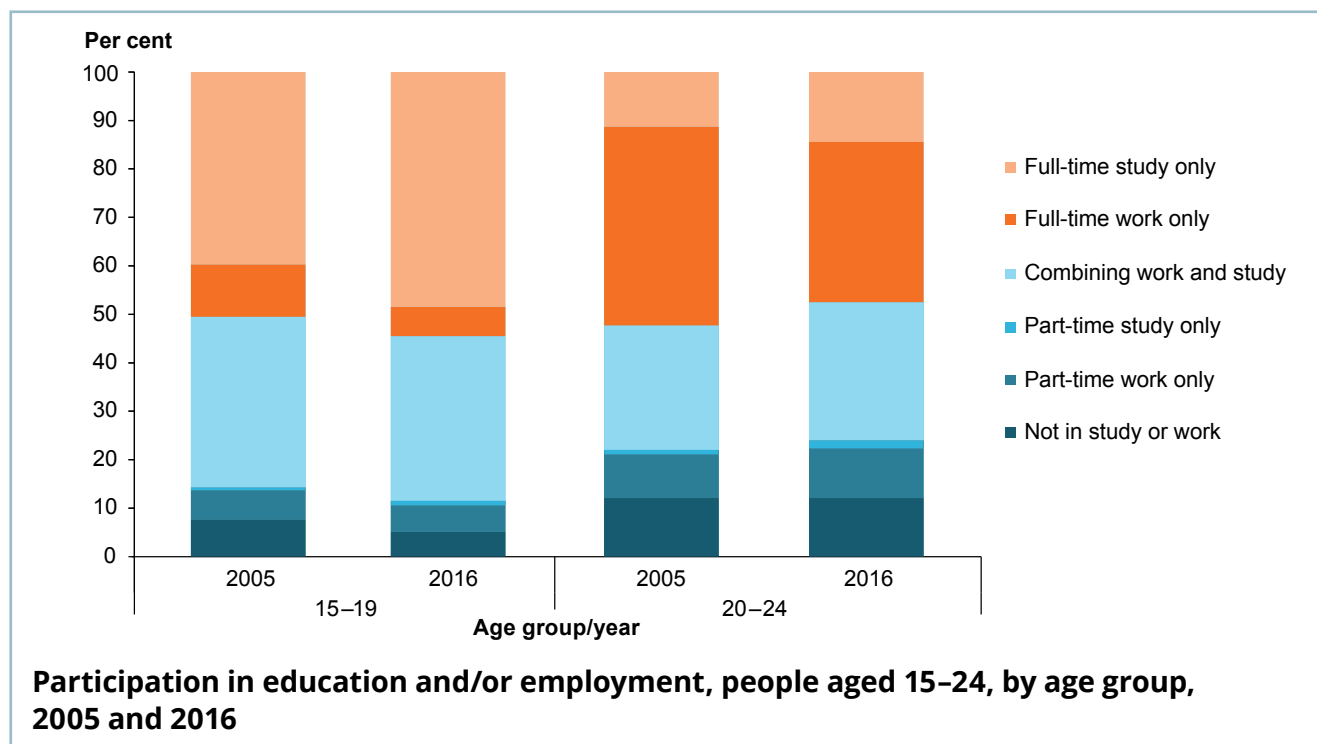
**Find out more:** Chapter 3.5 'How are we faring in education' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# 1 in 11 young people not in education or work

Following compulsory schooling, young people have several education and training options. They can enter the workforce, complete further study, or combine both. Although most (91%) people aged 15–24 were engaged in education and/or employment in 2016, 8.8% were not—5.1% of people aged 15–19 and 12% of people aged 20–24.

Between 2005 and 2016, the proportion of people:

- aged 15–19 not in employment, education or training (NEET) fell (from 7.7% to 5.1%), but the proportion of NEETs aged 20–24 remained similar (at around 12%)
- aged 15–19 and 20–24 engaged in full-time work (and not studying) fell, while the proportion engaged in full-time study (only) rose
- aged 20–24 combining work and study increased slightly—from 26% to 29%.



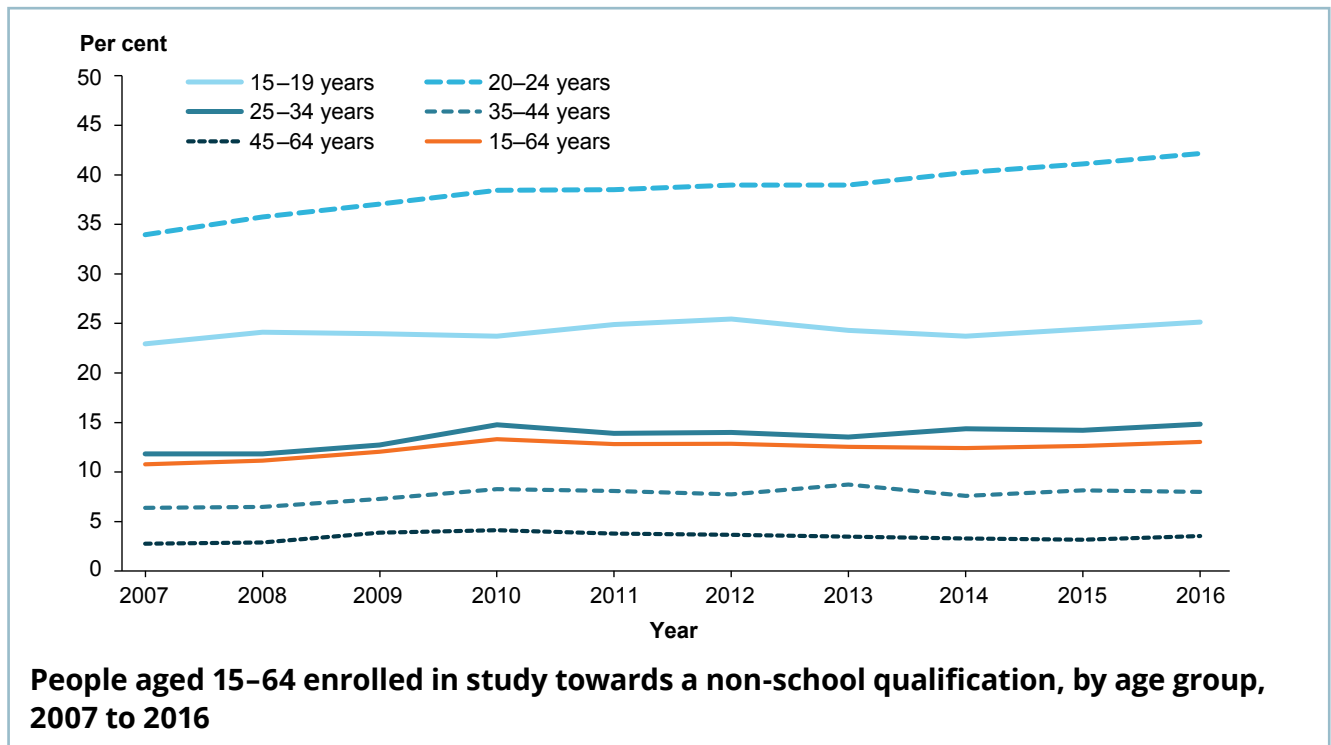
**Find out more:** Chapter 3.1 'Pathways through education and training' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

## Enrolments in non-school qualifications on the rise

Higher levels of educational attainment are associated with higher employment rates and higher relative earnings, more social engagement and better health. Non-school education in Australia can be broadly categorised as being either tertiary (also called 'higher education') or vocational education and training (including apprenticeships).

As at May 2016, 2.2 million people aged 15–64 were enrolled in formal study towards a non-school qualification—1.3 million (59%) of these were attending a higher education institution such as a university.

People aged 20–24 made up the highest proportion of people studying for non-school qualifications. Between 2007 and 2016, enrolments increased proportionally for all age groups, with the largest increase seen for people aged 20–24 (from 34% to 42%).



**Find out more:** Chapter 3.4 'Tertiary education' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

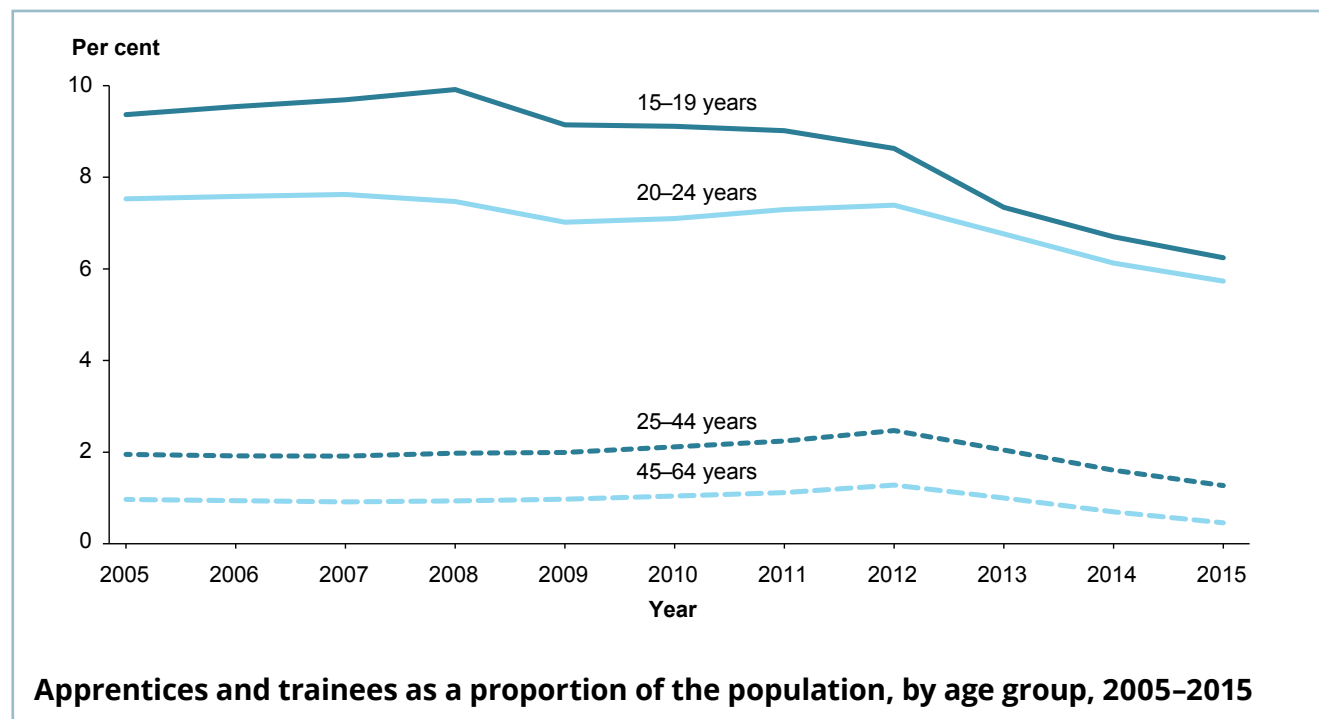
# Apprenticeship and traineeship numbers continue to fall

As at 30 June 2016:

- apprenticeship and traineeship commencements (in the previous 12 months) had been falling since a peak in 2012, and were at their lowest since 1998 (168,800 in 2016)
- completions (in the previous 12 months) had also been falling since a peak in 2013, and were at their lowest since 2002 (107,900 in 2016).

Most of the recent decline in apprenticeship and traineeship numbers were in non-trade occupations.

As well as these falls, the proportion of the population who are apprentices and trainees has declined over time for all age groups. For example, the proportion of the population aged 15–19 who were apprentices and trainees declined from 9.4% in 2005 to 6.2% in 2015 (with a peak of 9.9% in 2008).

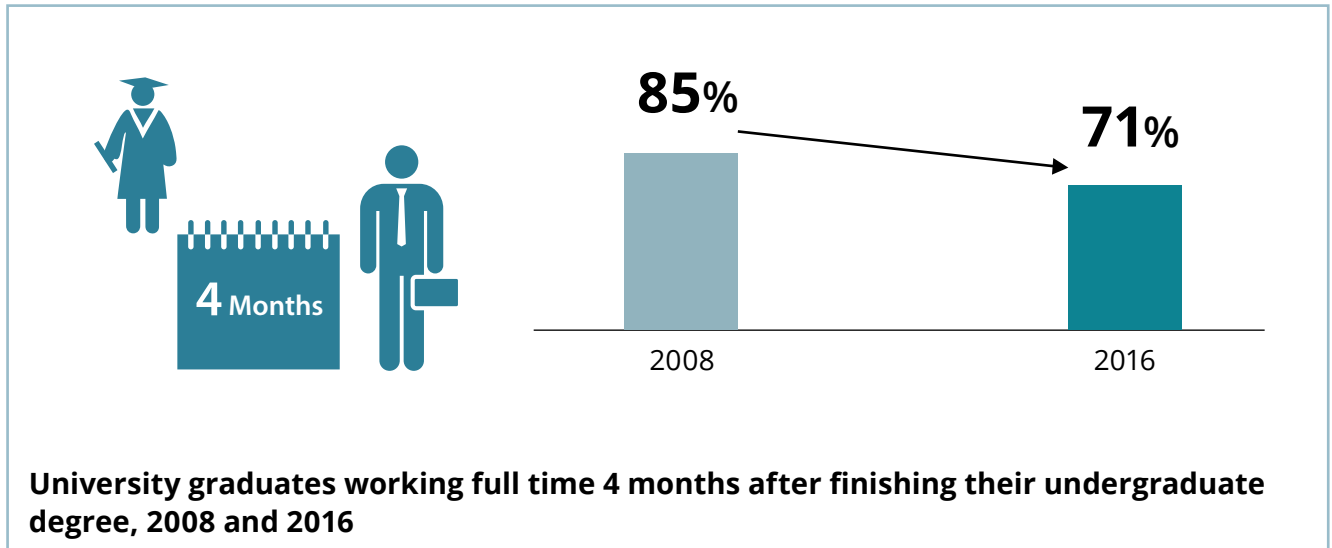


**Find out more:** Chapter 3.3 'Apprenticeships and traineeships' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Gaining full-time employment is increasingly challenging for young people

It can be a challenge for some young people to find sustainable or full-time employment, even after graduating from higher education.

- The proportion of young people (aged 15–24) in full-time employment has declined over time. In 2017, 27% of young people worked full time, compared with 35% a decade ago and 48% 3 decades ago.
- The proportion of young people working part time in 2017 was 31%—rising from 28% a decade ago and 13% 3 decades ago.
- In 2016, 71% of university graduates were working full time 4 months after finishing their undergraduate degree, a fall from 85% in 2008.
- Most (80–90%) people who complete an apprenticeship or traineeship are employed within 6 months of finishing their training.



**Find out more:** Chapter 3.1 'Pathways through education and training' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# 4 Our working lives

Being employed provides income, but it also has important benefits for a person's health, social and emotional wellbeing. For example, having a job can help a person to stay connected with society, develop skills and provide a sense of self-worth.

Not having a job can negatively affect an individual's feelings of self-worth, their skill development or retention (further reducing employability) and their connection with society. It is also an important consideration in providing welfare services and supports.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of people aged 15–64 were employed in 2017, with rates higher for males than females:

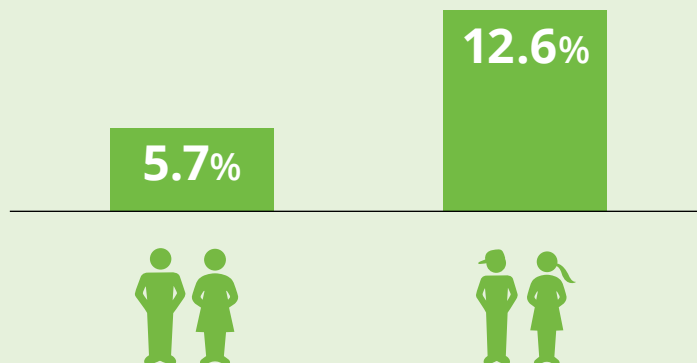


**77%**



**67%**

The unemployment rate was much higher for young people than for all people in the labour force, with 12.6% of 15–24 year-olds unemployed in 2016:



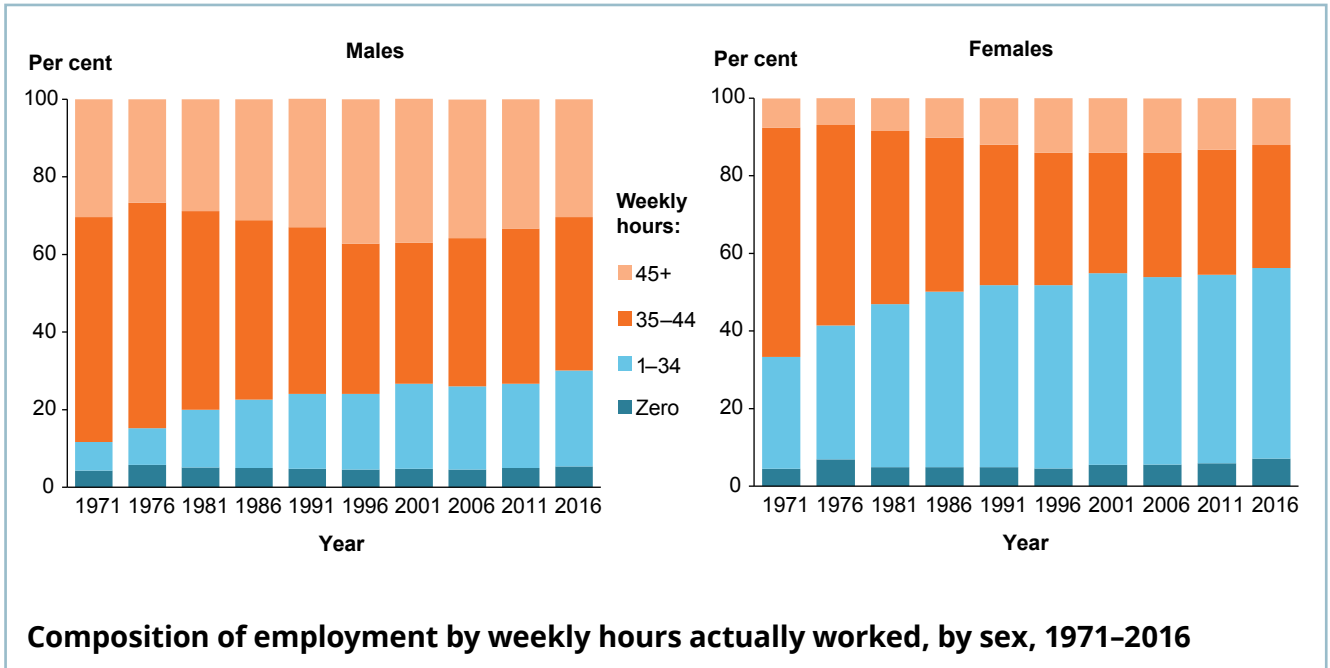


# Nearly one-third of jobs are part time

The Australian labour market has undergone substantial changes over the past 50 years. One of the biggest changes has been the rise of part-time work—31% of all jobs in 2016 involved part-time hours, compared with just 10% in 1966.

Part-time employment in Australia is high by international standards. Of all countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, only the Netherlands and Switzerland had higher rates of part-time employment than Australia in 2015.

Fewer employed people are working a ‘standard length’ week (35–44 hours), and both males and females are more likely to work part-time hours than in the past. For example, the proportion of employed males working part time more than tripled between 1971 and 2016 (from 7.4% to 25%).

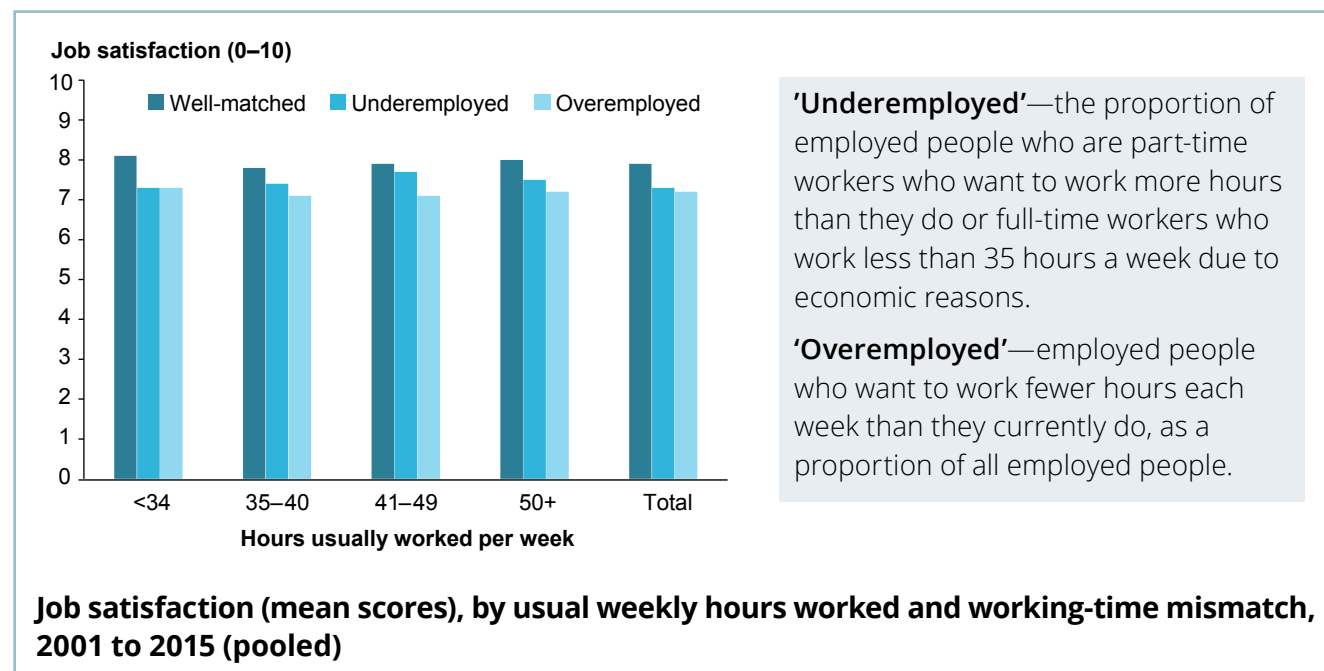


**Find out more:** Chapter 4.1 ‘The changing nature of work and worker wellbeing’ in *Australia’s welfare 2017*.

# Working-time mismatch and job security affects worker wellbeing

The underemployment rate is at its highest level since the 1970s, accounting for 9.3% of all employed people. However, this rise has been offset by a decline in overemployment.

Our wellbeing does not vary much with the number of hours we usually work in a week. What really matters is whether the number of hours worked aligns with our preferences for how long we want to work. Underemployed and overemployed workers report lower levels of life and job satisfaction, and worse mental health, than people whose work hours are matched with their preferences. For example, for job satisfaction, underemployed and overemployed workers had mean scores of 7.3 and 7.2 (on a 10-point satisfaction scale) respectively, compared with 7.9 for people who were well matched.



Workers who perceive their jobs to be secure (regardless of their contractual arrangement; for example whether they are permanent or casual) report not only much higher satisfaction with job security, but also higher levels of job and life satisfaction and better mental health.

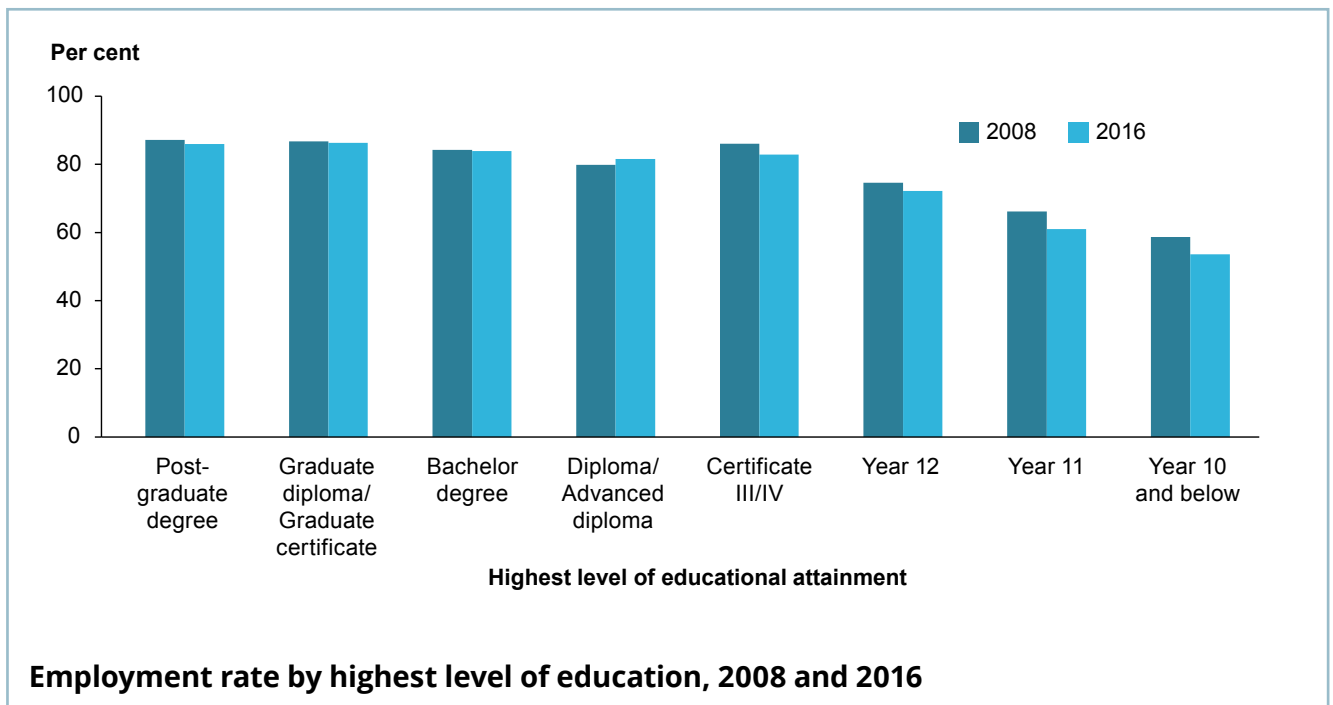
**Find out more:** Chapter 4.1 'The changing nature of work and worker wellbeing' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Education is key for employment

Jobs are increasingly becoming higher skilled. In turn, this is increasing the demand for a more educated and qualified workforce. In 2016, 2 in 3 (66%) people in the labour force had a non-school qualification, compared with 36% in the late 1970s.

In 2016, people with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to be employed: more than 80% of people with a non-school qualification were employed compared with 54% of people whose highest qualification was Year 10 or below.

There was generally no change over time in the proportion of those with higher levels of education who were employed; however, people with lower levels of educational attainment (particularly Year 12 or below) were less likely to be employed in 2016 than they were in 2008.

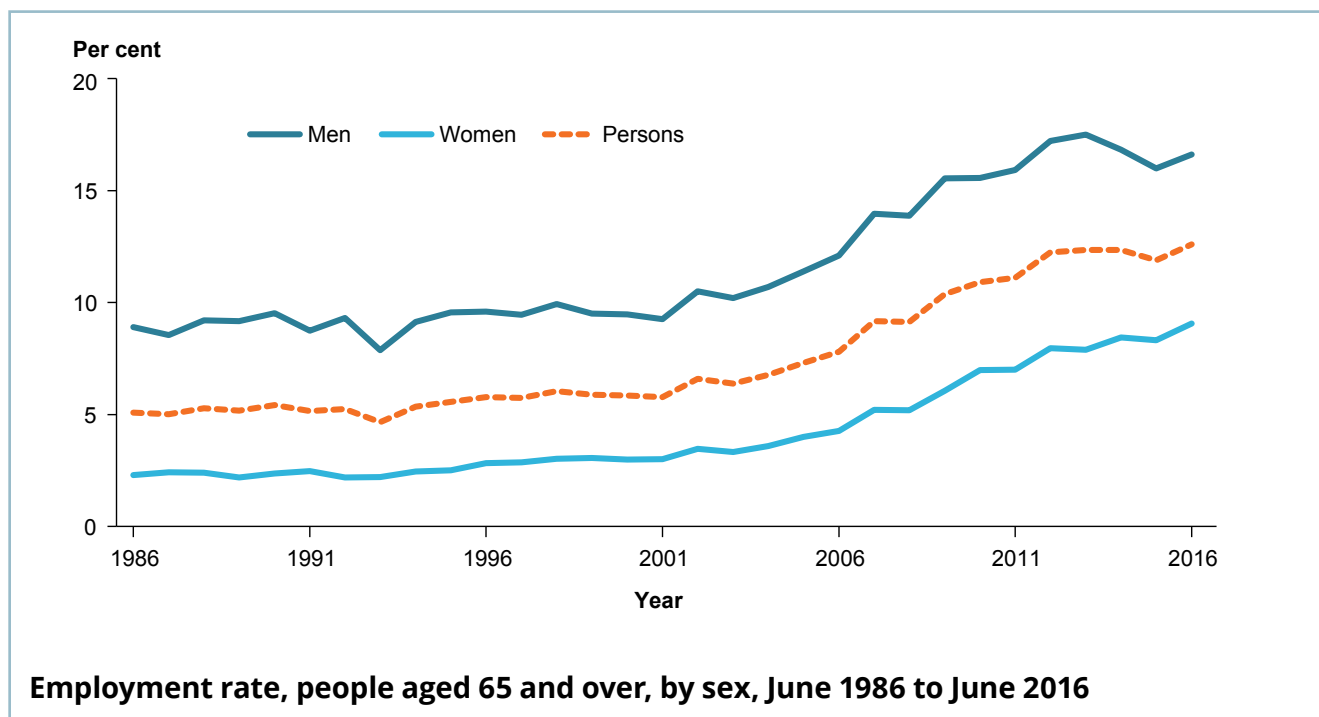


**Find out more:** Chapter 4.2 'Key employment trends' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Seniors' workforce participation more than doubled over 30 years

Australians are living longer than in the past, and many remain healthy and active past retirement age. This means they can continue to work, or re-enter the workforce.

The employment rate has increased among people aged 65 and over, from 5.1% in 1986 to 13% in 2016, with the unemployment rate remaining relatively steady at around 1.4%.



There has also been a growth in part-time work and a decline in full-time work over the last 3 decades for people aged 65 and over. Between 1986 and 2016, the proportion of employed older people working part time increased from 49% to 59%. In 2016, three-quarters (76%) of employed women and nearly half (48%) of employed men aged 65 and over worked part time.







**Find out more:** Chapter 4.3 'Seniors in the workforce' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Around one-third of us volunteer, but the rates are declining

Volunteers provide an invaluable service to the community and organisations.

In 2014, there were around 5.8 million people aged 15 and over (or 31% of the population) who had volunteered in the last 12 months. However, the proportion of people who volunteered declined between 2006 and 2014, from 34% to 31%.

In 2014, the proportion of volunteers was highest among people:

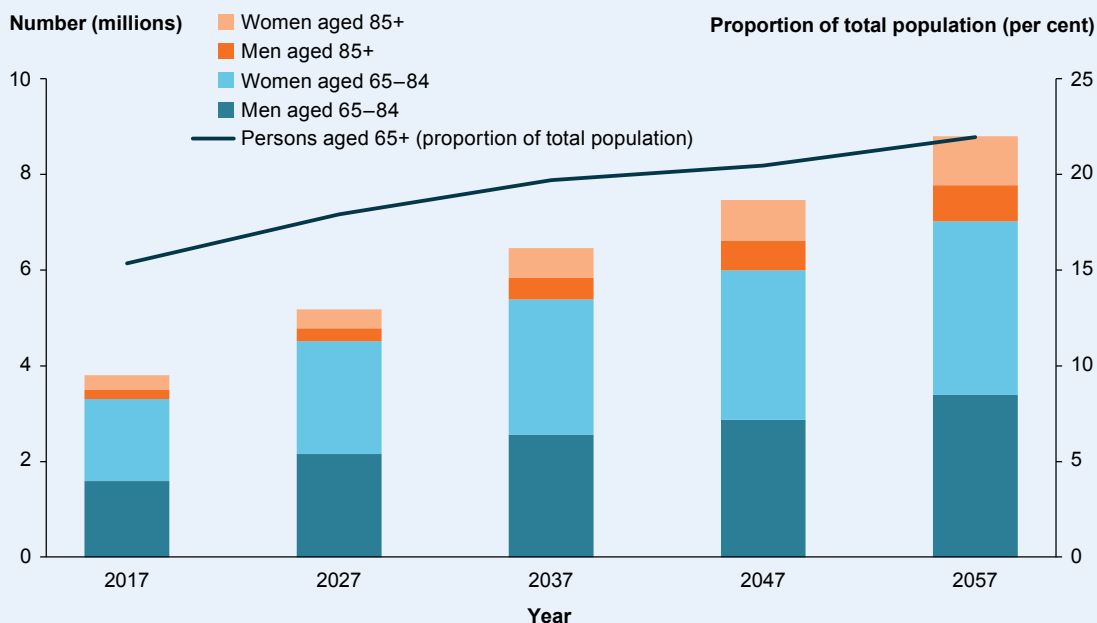
	born in Australia (34%)
	aged 15–17 (42%)
	living in <i>Outer regional / Remote</i> areas (39%)
	working part time (38%)
	with a Bachelor degree or above (41%)
	from the highest income households (39%)

**Find out more:** Chapter 4.4 'Working for free—volunteers in Australia' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# 5 Ageing and aged care

Australia's population is ageing. This demographic shift presents a range of challenges and opportunities for older Australians and the wider community.

The number of people aged 65 and over in Australia is projected to more than double, to 8.8 million, over the next 40 years.



**Number and proportion of the population aged 65 and over, by age group and sex, 30 June 2017, 2027, 2037, 2047 and 2057**

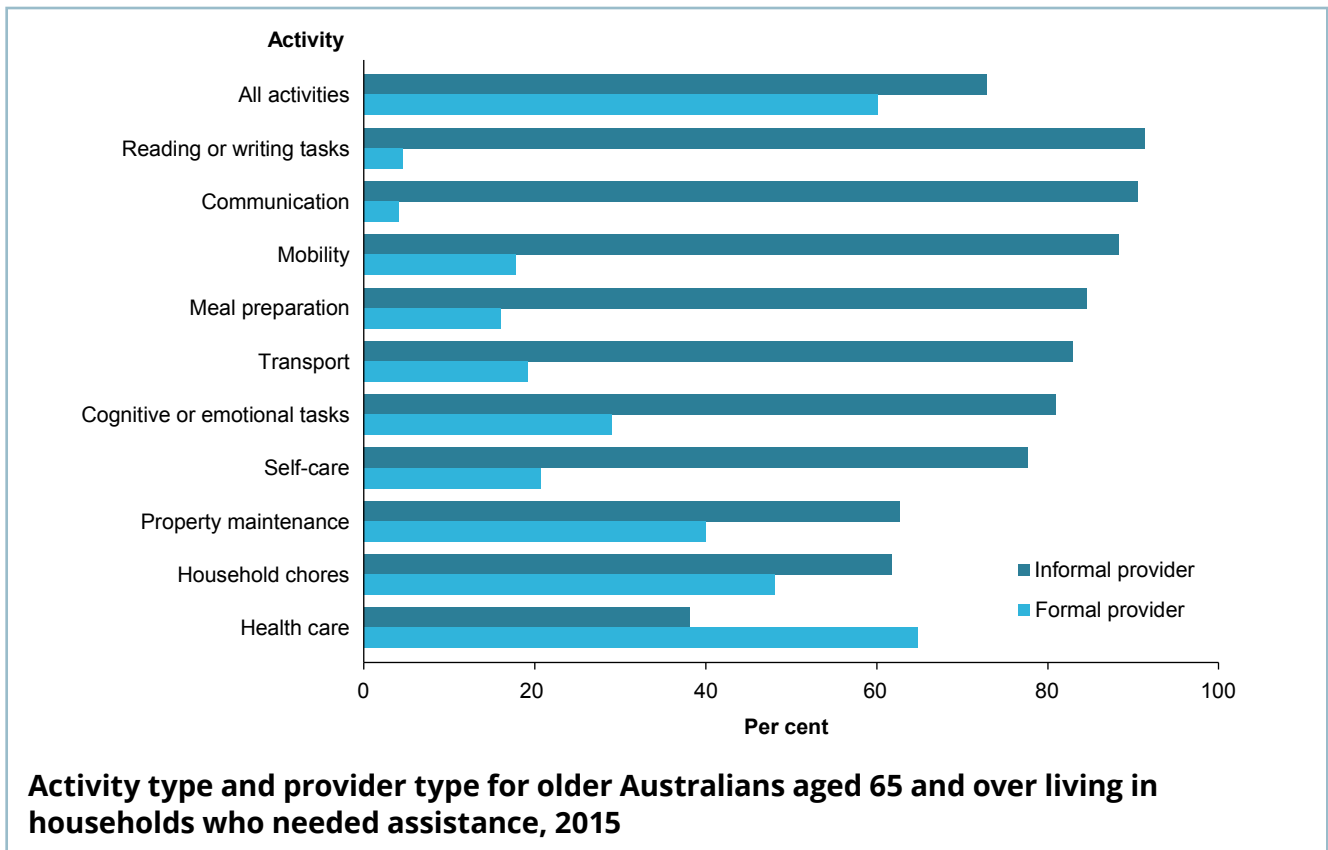
As the population grows and more Australians reach advanced old age, the number of people with dementia is expected to rise. Dementia is a leading cause of disability in older Australians. It brings a substantial burden for people with dementia, their family members and caregivers (often one and the same), and increasing cost to government.

An estimated 365,000 Australians had dementia in 2017, 99% of whom were aged 60 and over. The number of people affected by dementia is projected to rise considerably, to 900,000 by 2050.

## Informal carers—the main form of support for older people

Many older Australians (aged 65 and over) want to remain in their own homes as they age, and most do so. Only 5% of older Australians live in cared accommodation (like nursing homes).

Almost 40% of older people living in households or cared accommodation need assistance with at least one activity (such as household chores or meal preparation). More assistance to older people living at home is provided by informal providers (73%) than formal providers (60%) but this varies, depending on the type of activity.



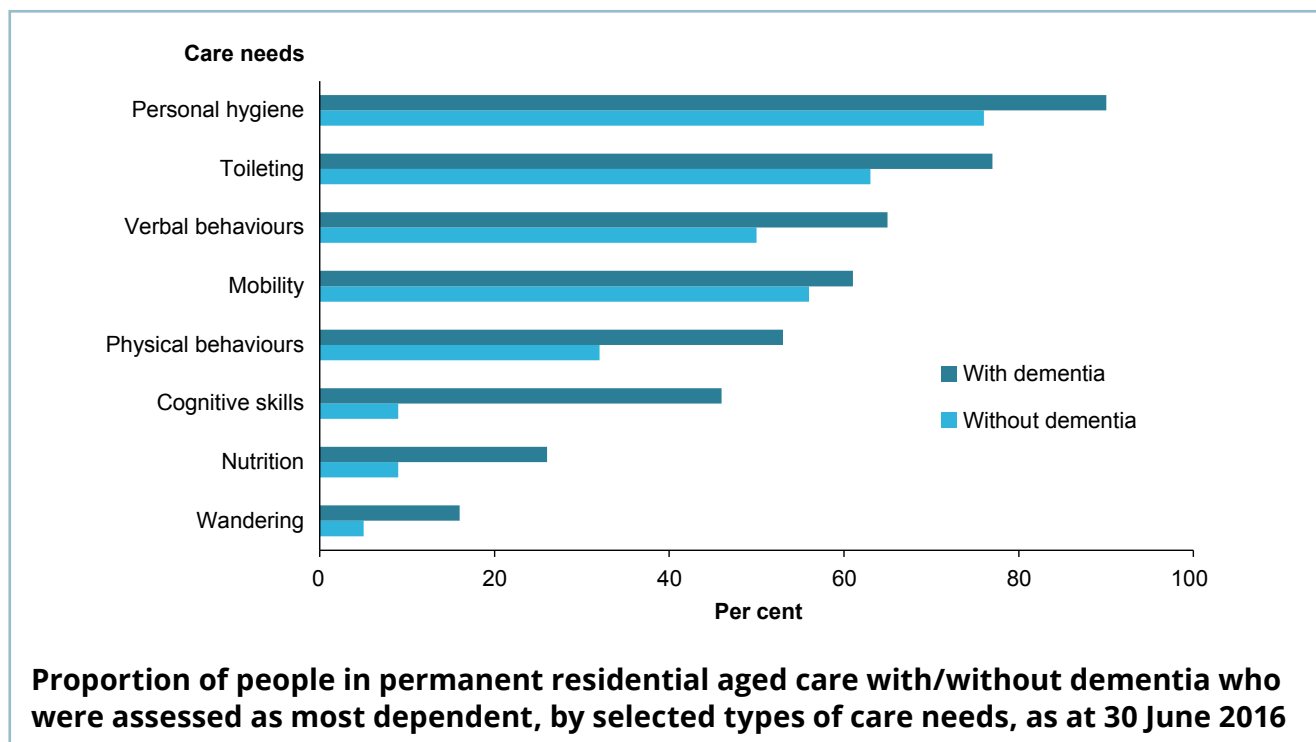
**Find out more:** Chapter 5.1 'Ageing and aged care' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# People with dementia require greater levels of care

In 2017, an estimated 365,000 people were living with dementia.

Almost half (49%) of people with dementia in 2015 lived in cared accommodation (such as residential aged care facilities) and nearly all had an associated disability.

Also, more than half (52%) of the people living in permanent residential aged care as at 30 June 2016 had dementia. On entry to permanent residential aged care, people's care needs are assessed. These assessments show that people with dementia were more likely to be rated as requiring a 'high' level of assistance with nearly all types of care than residents without dementia. This was particularly so for cognitive skills (5 times as likely as people without dementia to be rated as 'most dependent'), wandering (3.2 times) and nutrition (2.9 times).



**Find out more:** Chapter 5.2 'Dementia and people's need for help from others' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

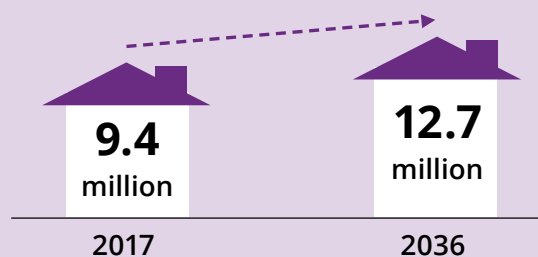


# 6 Housing and homelessness

Access to affordable, secure and appropriate housing can help to reduce the likelihood that a person will experience social exclusion, overcrowding, homelessness, and poor physical and mental health.

Homelessness can profoundly affect a person's health (mental and physical), education and employment opportunities, and their ability to participate fully in social and community life.

The number of households in Australia is growing and is expected to continue to grow into the future:



The demand for social housing in Australia is high. (Social housing is rental housing funded or partly funded by government, and provided by the government or a community organisation to eligible persons.) Assistance is prioritised for households in greatest need. Around 394,000 households were living in social housing in 2015–16—a 4% increase since 2007–08.

Governments across Australia fund a range of specialist services to support people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The latest estimate of homelessness is from the 2011 Census, when more than 105,000 Australians were homeless. In 2015–16, specialist homelessness services supported 1 in 85 people (280,000 people).

Family, domestic and sexual violence is the leading cause of homelessness and housing instability in Australia, and is consistently one of the most common reasons clients seek assistance from specialist homelessness services (SHS). In 2015–16, 38% of SHS clients had experienced family and domestic violence and 92% of these were women and children. The number of family and domestic violence clients has increased by 33% since 2011–12.

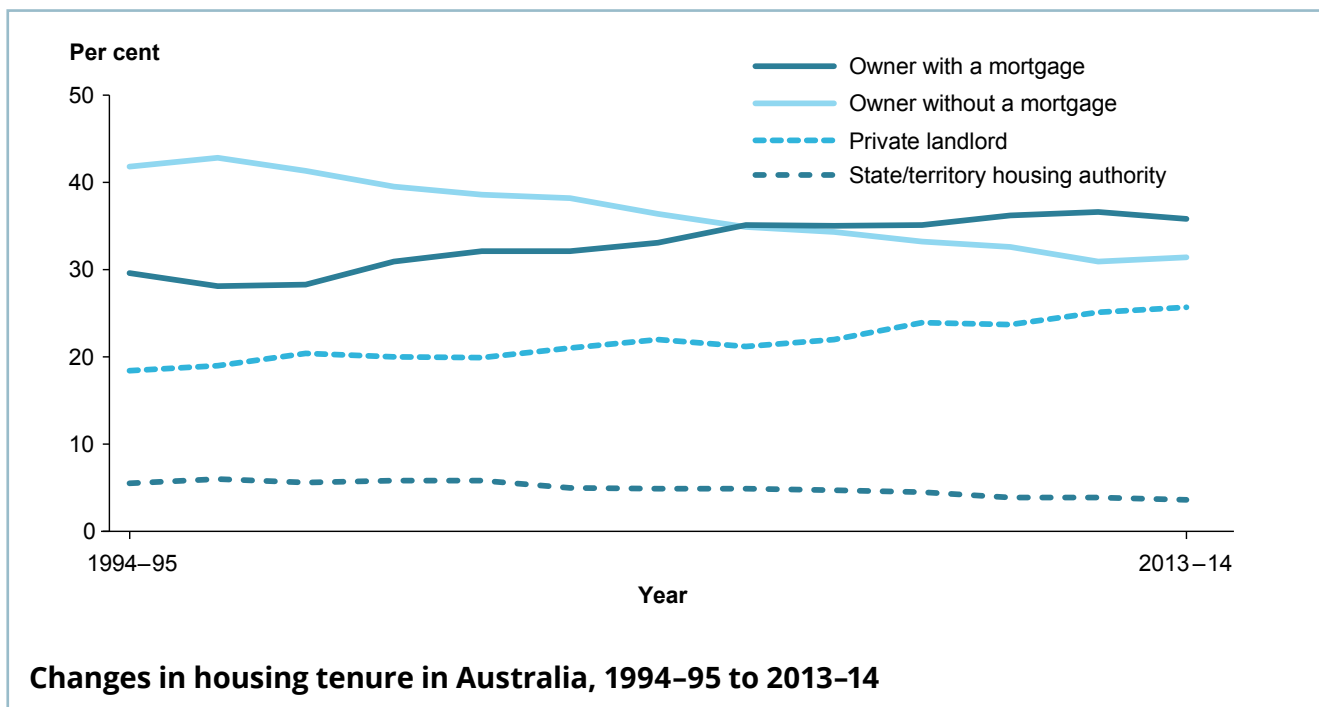
## Falling affordability for renters and buyers

House prices have risen substantially in recent decades. A growing proportion of people are renting and a decreasing proportion own their houses outright.

Over the last 2 decades, the proportion of Australians who own their home, with or without a mortgage, fell from 71% to 67%. More home owners financed their purchase with a mortgage (rising from 30% to 36%) and fewer owned their home outright (dropping from 42% to 31%).

Home ownership rates have been falling most dramatically for young people over the last 25 years: 39% of people aged 25–34 owned a home in 2013–14, compared with 60% in 1988–89.

Affordability is also diminishing for households that rent, with renters experiencing a 62% (or \$144) increase in average weekly housing costs over the last 2 decades.

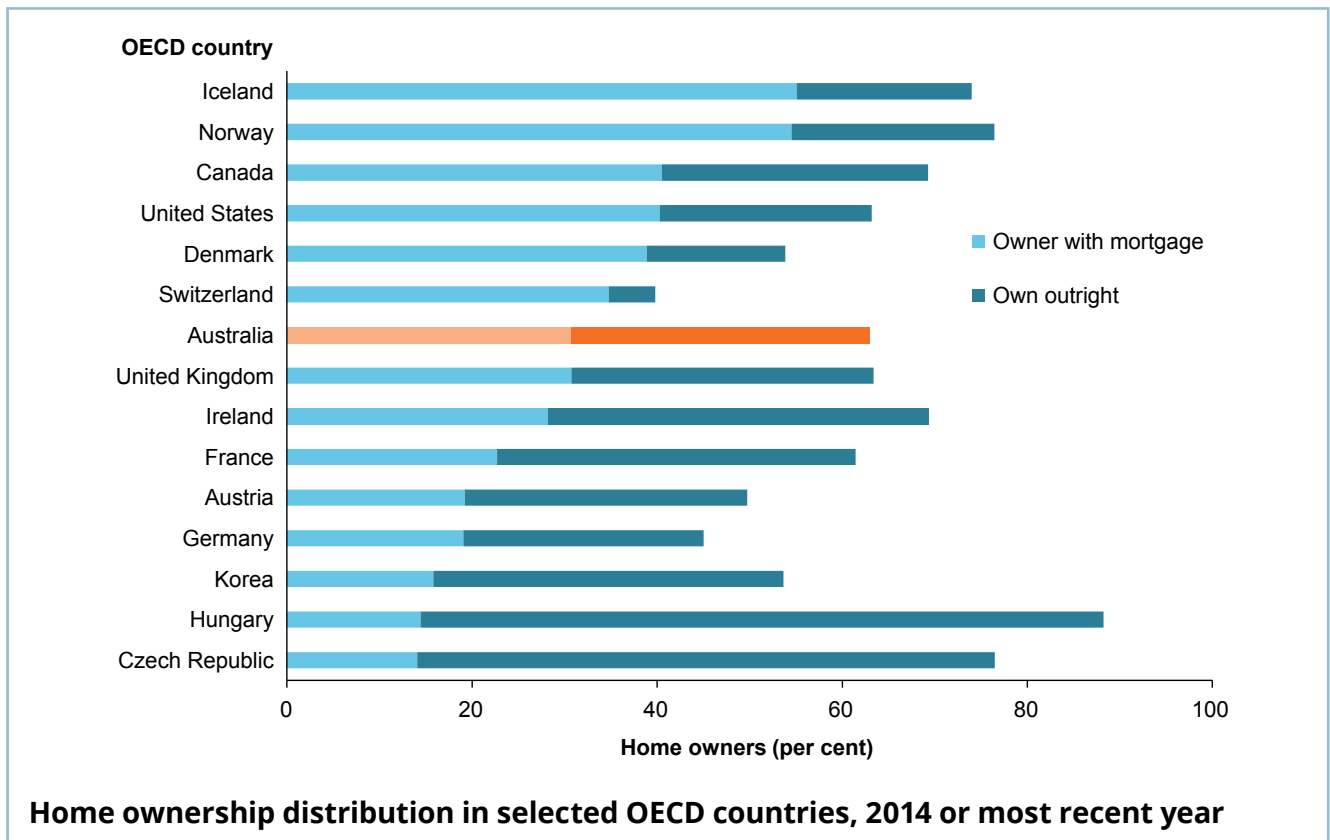


**Find out more:** Chapter 6.3 'The changing shape of housing in Australia' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Australian home ownership rates not high compared with other OECD countries

Home ownership is still the most common tenure type in Australia, though it is declining. In contrast, home ownership rates have tended to grow over recent decades in many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, despite some large differences.

Australia ranks in the lowest third of OECD countries for aggregate home ownership rates (29th of 35 OECD countries, with and without a mortgage), but we rank in the top third (12th highest) for home owners with a mortgage.

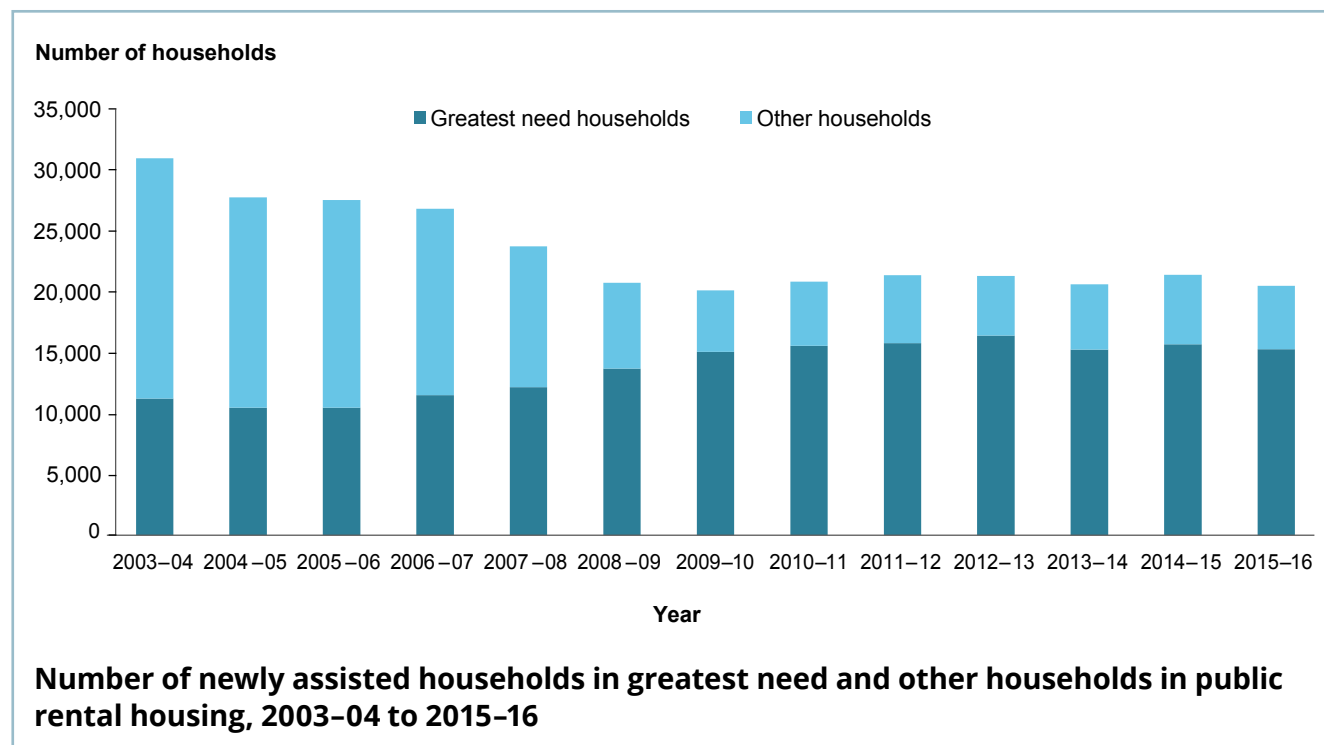


**Find out more:** Chapter 6.3 'The changing shape of housing in Australia' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

## Social housing serving those in greatest need

Around 195,000 households were on social housing waiting lists in June 2016. The wait to enter social housing can be long. The wait is generally not as long, though, for households in greatest need (whose members can also have special needs, such as living with disability or experiencing domestic and family violence).

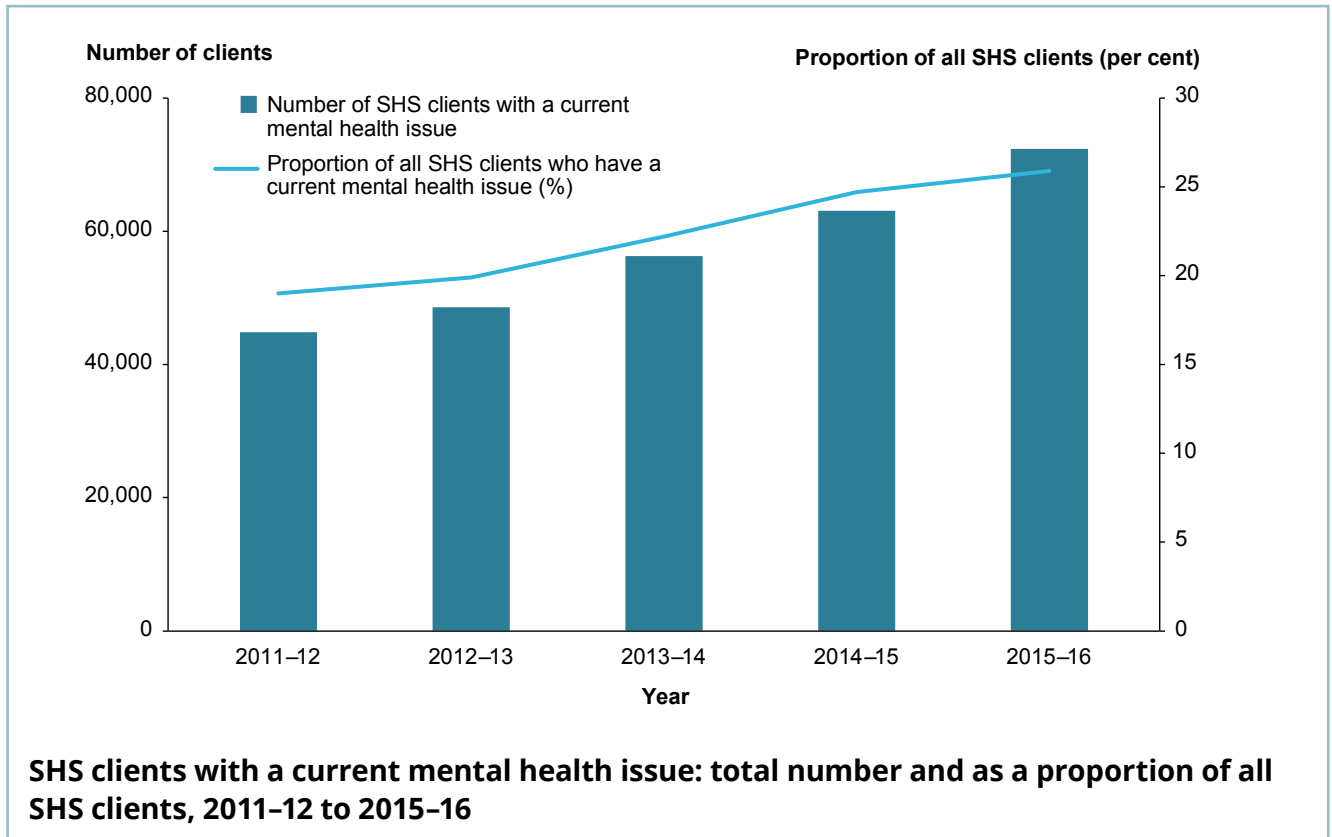
The proportion of newly assisted households in greatest need has more than doubled in the last 12 years. In 2015–16, 15,300 or 74% of households in public rental housing programs (the largest social housing program) were those in greatest need, compared with around 11,200 or 36% in 2003–04. The total number of newly assisted households fell from 31,000 to 20,500 over the same period, partly because of a reduction in public rental housing dwelling stock.



**Find out more:** Chapter 6.1 'Social housing' and Chapter 9.2 'Indicators of Australia's welfare' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# 1 in 4 people accessing homelessness support have mental health issues

'Mental health issues' is one of the main pathways into homelessness. Specialist homelessness services (SHS) clients with a current mental health issue make up the fastest growing client group within the SHS population, growing at an average rate of 13% per year since 2011-12.



**Find out more:** Chapter 6.2 'Homelessness' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# 7 Indigenous Australians

There were an estimated 761,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia as at 30 June 2017, or 3% of the total population. There are demographic differences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. For example:

Most (79%) Indigenous Australians live in non-remote areas



**4 in 5**



**1 in 5** Indigenous Australians live in *Remote and Very remote* areas



(compared with less than 1 in 50 non-Indigenous people)

The Indigenous population is much younger than the non-Indigenous population. The median age was:

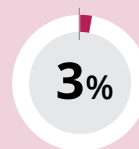


Indigenous

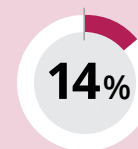


Non-Indigenous

At 30 June 2011, the proportion of people aged 65 or over was:



Indigenous



Non-Indigenous

Indigenous households are less likely than other households to be lone-person households (14% compared with 25%), more likely to consist of two or more families (6% compared with 2%) and more likely to contain 5 or more people (23% compared with 10%).

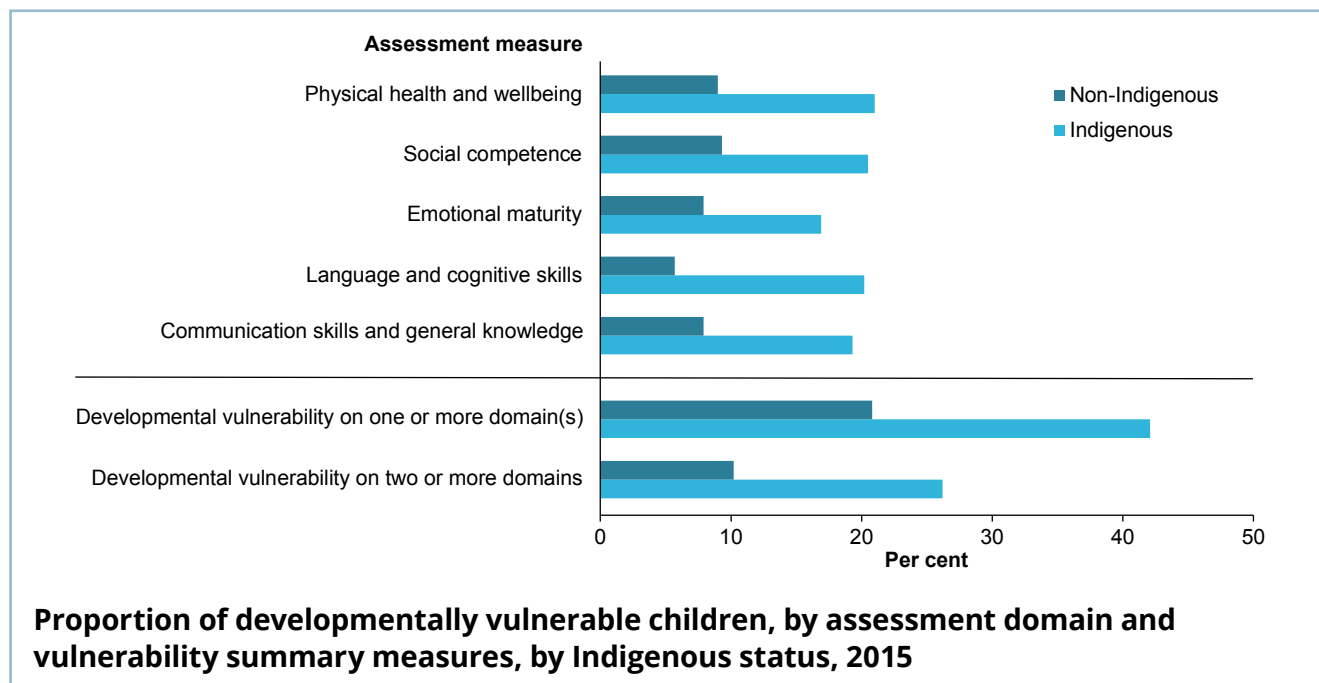
Indigenous communities pass on knowledge, tradition, ceremony and culture from one generation to the next through language, performance, protection of significant sites, storytelling and the teachings of Elders. In 2014–15, 62% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over identified with a clan, tribal or language group, and 74% recognised an area as homelands or traditional country.

Indigenous Australians experience widespread socioeconomic disadvantage and health inequality. Factors like discrimination and racism, violence, alcohol and drug use and high psychological distress can negatively affect social and emotional wellbeing. Poor social and emotional wellbeing, in turn, can have negative impacts on employment, income, living conditions and opportunities.

# Indigenous children twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable

Nationally, in 2015, around 42% of all Indigenous children in their first year of full-time schooling were categorised as developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the five key areas of early childhood development (or domains), compared with 21% of all non-Indigenous children.

Indigenous children living in *Very remote* areas were 1.5 times as likely as Indigenous children living in *Major cities* to be assessed as vulnerable on one or more of the domains, and were the least likely to have improved over the last 6 years (for all remoteness areas).



## But the gap is getting smaller

The rate of developmental vulnerability for all Indigenous children dropped from 47% in 2009 to 42% in 2015. Some encouraging progress has been made to reduce the gap in early childhood development outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children over time.

**Find out more:** Chapter 7.4 'Closing the gap in Indigenous education' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

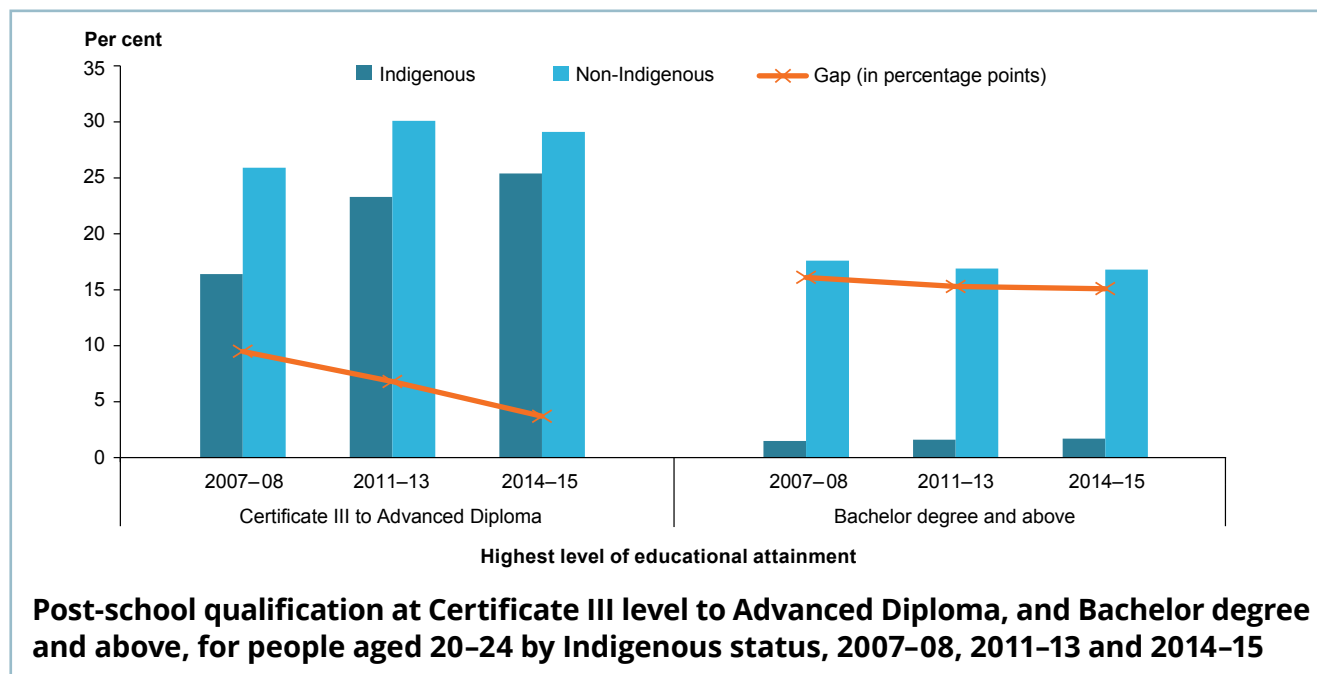
# Literacy and numeracy targets out of reach

Indigenous students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 consistently achieve lower scores in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests than non-Indigenous students. The current performance and trajectory suggest that Indigenous students are not on track to meet almost every 2018 target. Also, literacy and numeracy scores decline substantially with increasing remoteness.

## Any improvements in Indigenous youth education targets?

The good news is that progress is on track to halve the gap in Year 12 attainment by 2020. The proportion of Indigenous people aged 20–24 who had attained a Year 12 or equivalent level of education has increased significantly, from 45% in 2008 to 62% in 2014–2015 (compared with 86% of non-Indigenous Australians).

The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people aged 20–24 who had obtained a post school qualification has not narrowed over time; however the proportion of Indigenous people in this age range who have done so has doubled since 2002. In 2014–15, the gap in attainment rates for Certificate III through to Advanced Diploma was almost eliminated, but a large gap remained for a Bachelor degree or higher.



**Find out more:** Chapter 7.4 'Closing the gap in Indigenous education' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.



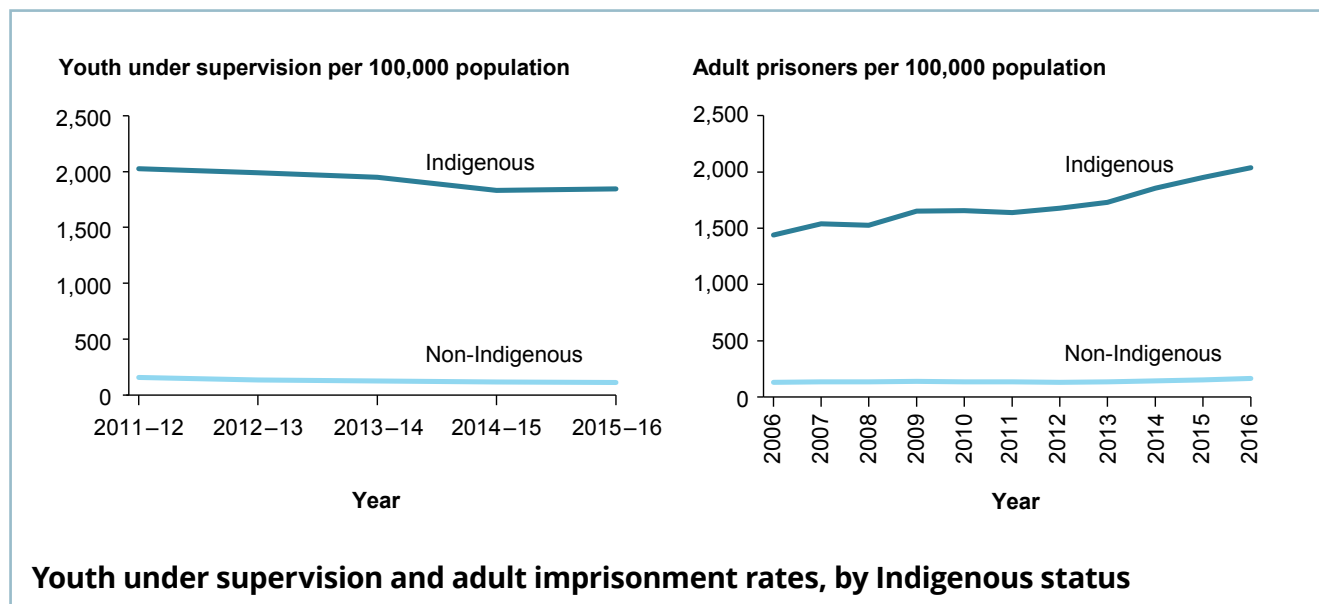
# Indigenous people over-represented in the child protection and justice systems

In 2015–16, Indigenous children aged 0–17 received child protection services at a rate around 7 times that for non-Indigenous children, and they were 10 times as likely to be in out-of-home care.

While Indigenous Australians aged 10–17 account for less than 6% of all Australians of that age, on an average day in 2015–16:

- 48% of young people under youth justice supervision were Indigenous
- more than half (59%) of young people in youth detention were Indigenous.

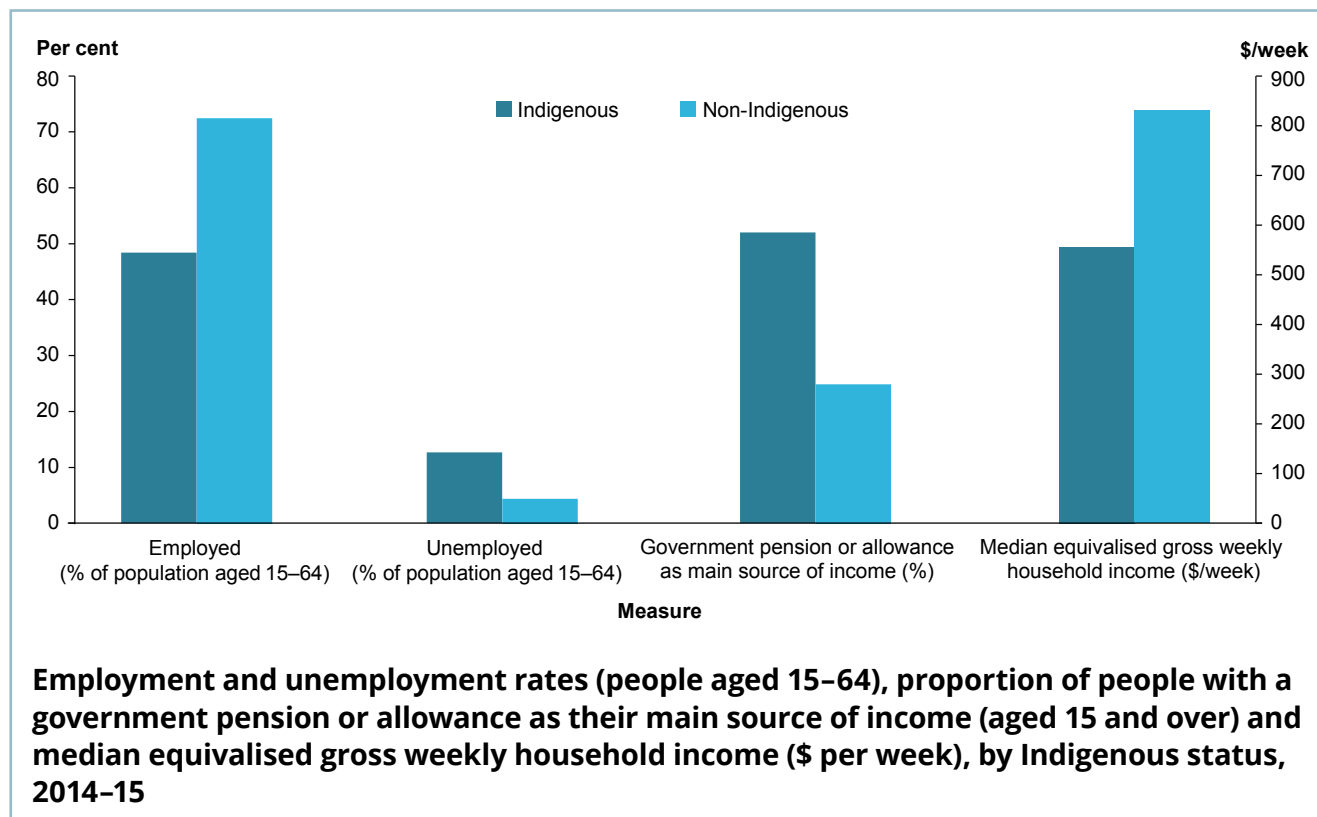
As at 30 June 2016, over one-quarter (27%) of the total Australian prison population was Indigenous—meaning that the Indigenous age-standardised imprisonment rate was 13 times that for non-Indigenous Australians.



**Find out more:** Chapter 7.3 'Community safety among Indigenous Australians' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Higher rates of unemployment and lower earnings

Indigenous Australians have higher unemployment rates than non-Indigenous Australians; they also earn lower household incomes and are more likely to receive a government pension or allowance, as their main source of income.



## But some improvement

The proportion of Indigenous people aged 18 and over with incomes in the bottom 20% of equivalised gross weekly household incomes decreased from 49% in 2008 to 37% in 2014–15. Despite this, Indigenous adults were still more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous adults to be in the bottom 20%.

**Find out more:** Chapter 7.5 'Income and employment for Indigenous Australians' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

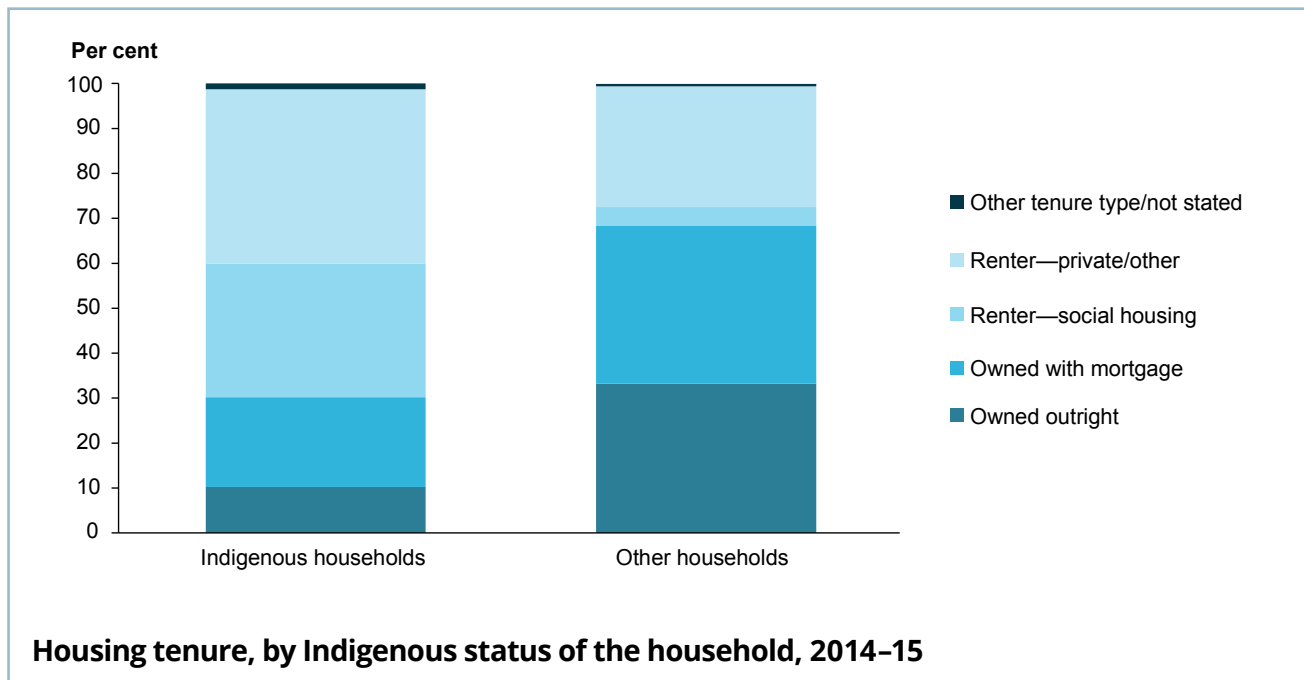
# Indigenous home ownership rates half that of other households

Compared with other households, Indigenous households are:

- half as likely to own their own home
- more than twice as likely to rent (public or private)
- more than 3 times as likely to live in overcrowded dwellings
- more than 7 times as likely to live in social housing.

There was little change in the proportion of Indigenous households that owned their home between 2008 and 2014–15.

Indigenous people are over-represented in homelessness services. In 2015–16, they made up 24% of clients accessing these services, a rate more than 9 times that for non Indigenous Australians.



**Find out more:** Chapter 7.1 'Community factors and Indigenous wellbeing' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Regional disparity for Indigenous people

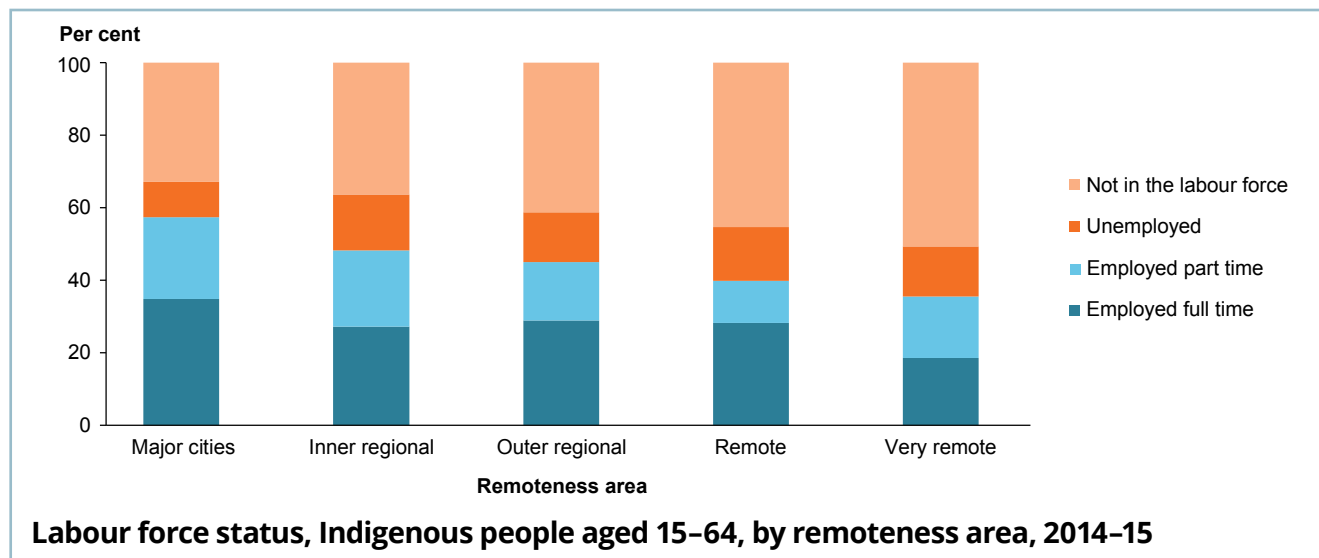
Indigenous Australians experience disadvantage and inequality across a wide range of measures. Disparity/differences also exist within the Indigenous population—with people living in *Remote/Very remote* areas faring relatively worse on several measures.

For example, compared with Indigenous people/households living in non-remote areas, Indigenous people/households in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas are:

- 2.7 times as likely to live in overcrowded dwellings
- 2.5 times as likely to live in social housing
- 1.9 times as likely to live in a house that does not meet acceptable standards
- half as likely to own their own home.

## How do earnings differ across remoteness areas?

Compared with Indigenous people/households in *Major cities*, Indigenous people/households in *Very remote* areas earn \$271 less a week, are 1.4 times as likely to be unemployed, are 1.5 times as likely to receive a government pension or allowance as their main source of income, and are far less likely to be working full or part time.



**Find out more:** Chapter 7 'Indigenous Australians' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Cultural and community positives for Indigenous Australians living remotely

While Indigenous people living in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas experience disparity across several areas compared with Indigenous people living in non-remote areas, they are more likely to report higher rates of community functioning and culture, which support wellbeing and build resilience.

Compared with Indigenous people living in non-remote areas, Indigenous people aged 15 and over in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas are:

- more likely to speak an Australian Indigenous language (55% compared with 8%)
- more likely to identify with a clan, or a tribal or language group (79% compared with 58%)
- more likely to have been involved in Indigenous cultural events, ceremonies or organisations in the last 12 months (82% compared with 57%)
- less likely to have used other drugs (drugs other than alcohol and tobacco) in the last 12 months (21% compared with 33%)
- less likely to have experienced homelessness (18% compared with 32%).



**Find out more:** Chapter 7.1 'Community factors and Indigenous wellbeing' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# 8 Disability and carers

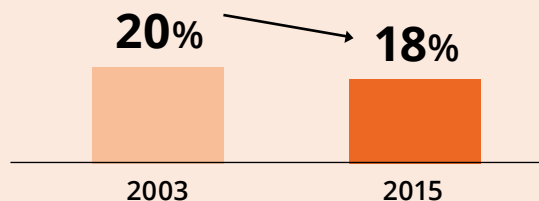
Some Australians face disadvantages that affect not only their physical and mental health, but also their participation in education, employment and social activities.

The World Health Organization estimates that 15% of the world's population (1 billion people) have a disability.

In 2015, 4.3 million Australians had a disability. That is:



The proportion of the population with disability has declined over time:



We are living longer without disability: years of life lived without disability in 2015 had increased since 2003, by 3.9 years for males (to 63.0 years), and by 3 years for females (to 65.2 years).

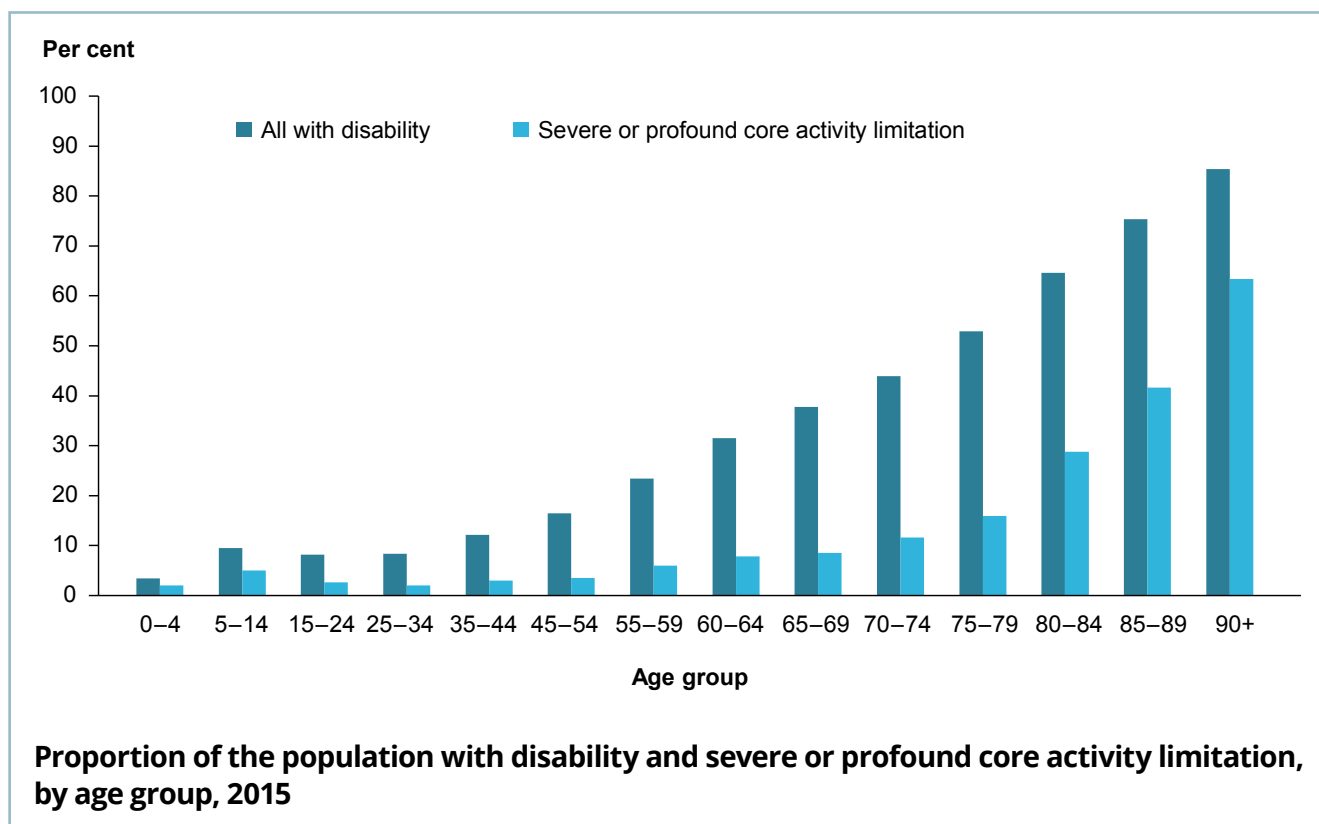
The likelihood of having a disability is similar for males and females. However, females are more likely than males to have a severe or profound core activity limitation—6.4% of females and 5.3% of males.

Four in 5 people with disability had a physical condition as their main long-term health condition; the remainder had a mental or behavioural disorder.

## 1.4 million with severe or profound disability

In 2015, 1 in 3 people with disability (5.8% of the total population) had severe or profound core activity limitation. This means that they sometimes or always needed help with day-to-day activities.

Disability rates increase steadily with age, ranging from 3% for children aged 0–4 to 85% for people aged 90 and over. By age 60, nearly 1 in 3 people (32%) report a disability; this rises to over 1 in 2 (53%) by age 75. A similar pattern is seen for people with severe or profound core activity limitation.



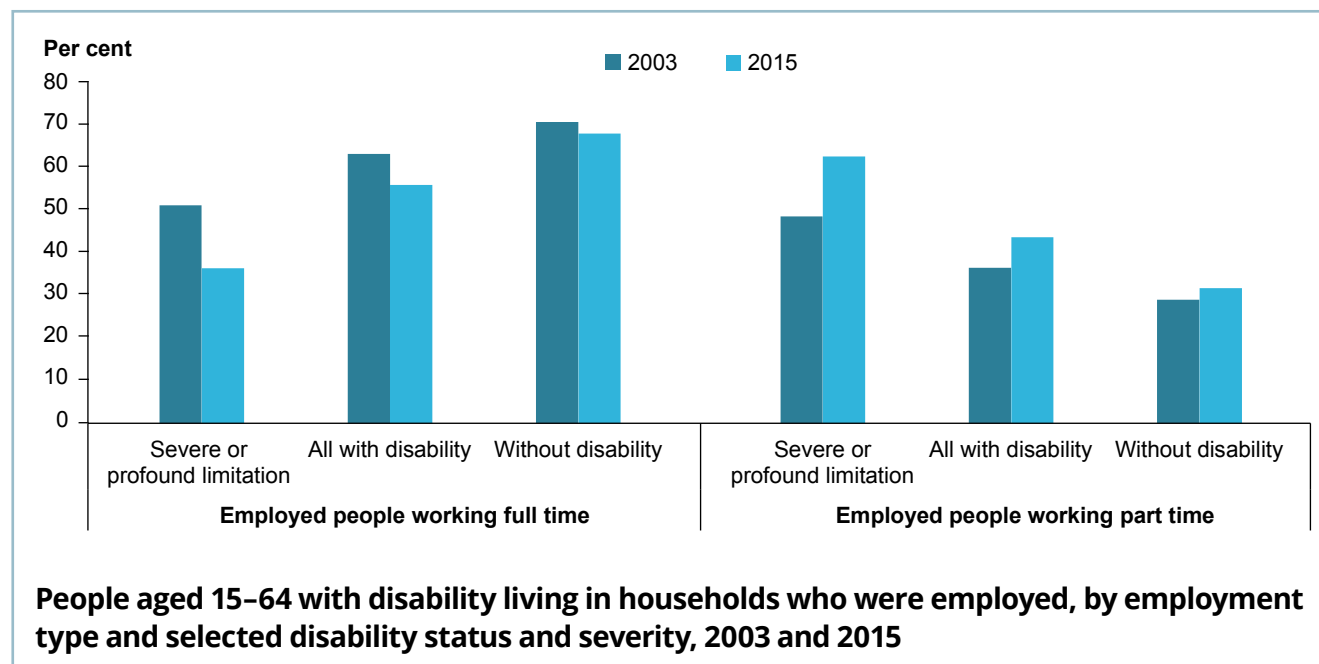
**Find out more:** Chapter 8.1 'People with disability' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Participation in work—a greater challenge for people with disability

While people with disability participate actively in all aspects of Australian life, they can face additional challenges doing so—any disability may limit the activities a person undertakes in their daily life.

In particular, people with disability have lower rates of labour force participation and employment, and higher rates of unemployment than people without disability—even more so for people with severe or profound core activity limitation. For example 22% of people with severe or profound core activity limitation were employed in 2015 (compared with 48% of all people with disability and 79% of people without disability).

Between 2003 and 2015, there has been a shift in the patterns of work for people with disability, with fewer employed people with disability working full time and more working part time. While this shift has also been seen among employed people without disability, it has been more pronounced for people with disability—especially people with severe or profound core activity limitation.



**Find out more:** Chapter 8.2 'Participation in society by people with disability' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

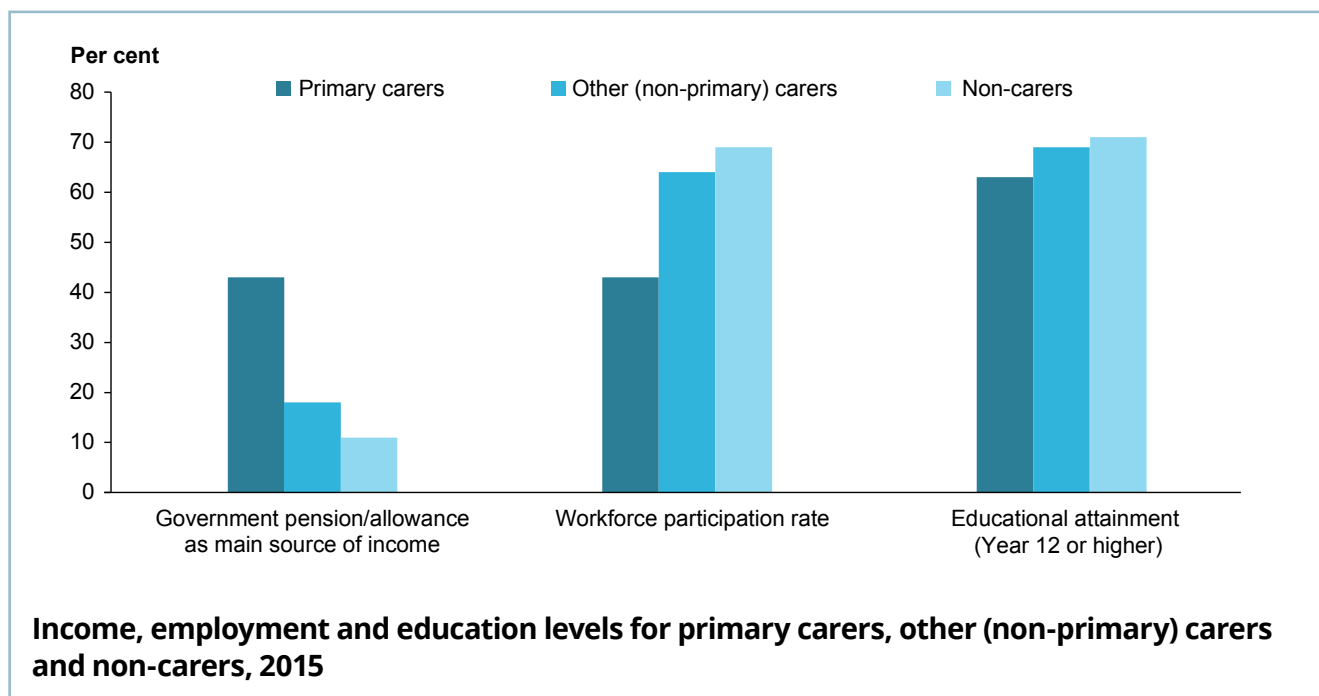


## More than 1 in 9 of us are informal carers

Informal carers play a substantial role in assisting people who need help in their daily lives. They provided an estimated 1.9 billion hours of unpaid care in 2015.

One in 9 (2.7 million) Australians were informal carers for people in need of assistance or support due to disability, health conditions or ageing in 2015. Nearly 1 in 3 (32%) of these were primary carers.

While aspects of caring can be enjoyable and rewarding, informal carers may experience social isolation, physical and emotional strain and restricted education and employment opportunities. Primary carers, as the main caregivers, often experience these challenges most. They are more likely than other carers and non-carers to rely on government pensions and allowances and less likely to have finished Year 12 or to be in the labour force.



**Find out more:** Chapter 8.3 'Informal carers' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

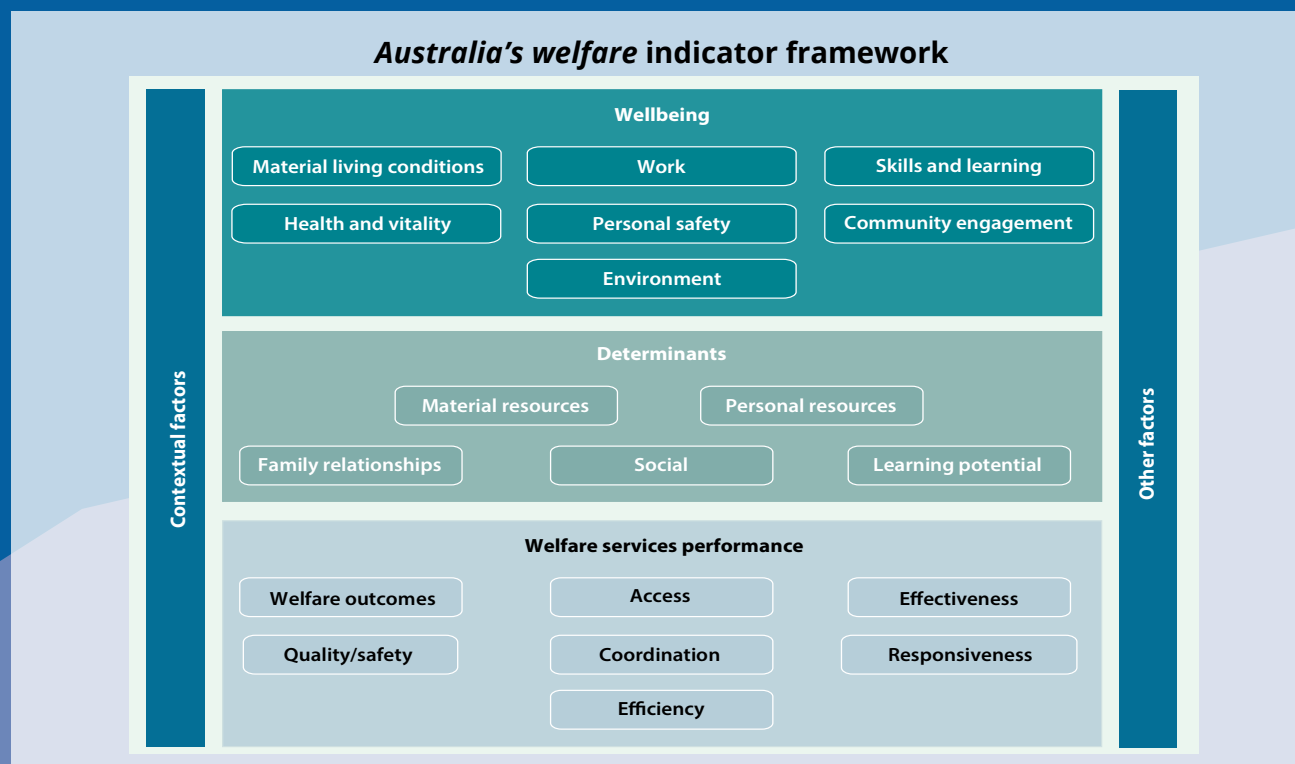
# 9 Indicators of *Australia's welfare*

Indicators are simple statistics that summarise often complex issues. Most indicators serve as *sentinel* indicators for the topic they represent; that is, they are useful to highlight particular results in an area of interest and help people to ask questions about why the result is as it is.

## ***Australia's welfare* indicator framework**

*Australia's welfare* includes an indicator framework based on 5 domains and 19 themes, shown here, and has 61 indicators.

A wellbeing domain was included for the first time in *Australia's welfare 2017*. It incorporates 7 themes, as shown here, and 15 indicators.

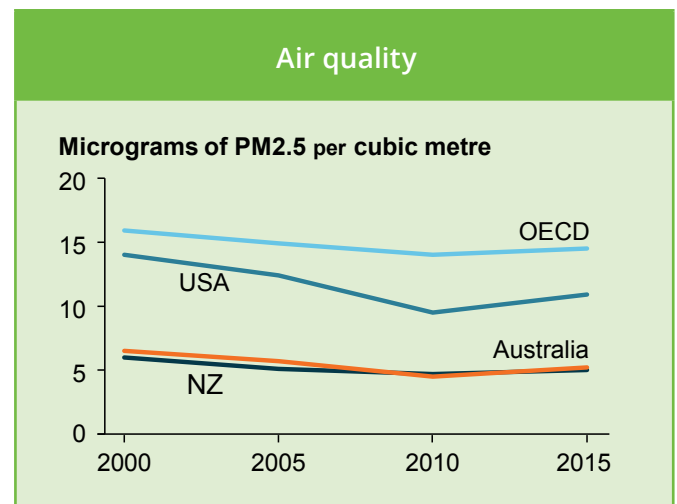
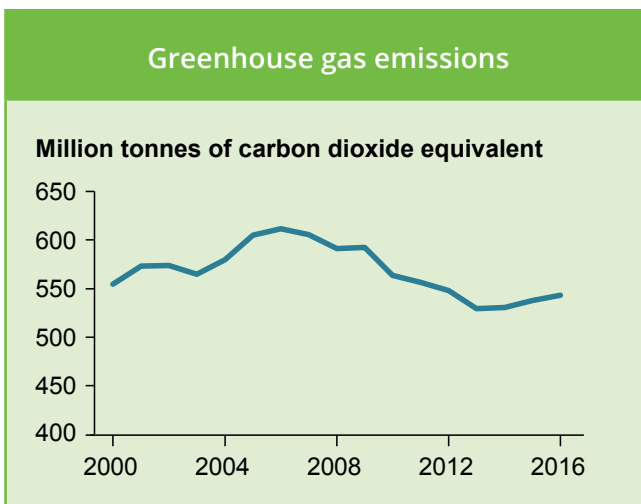
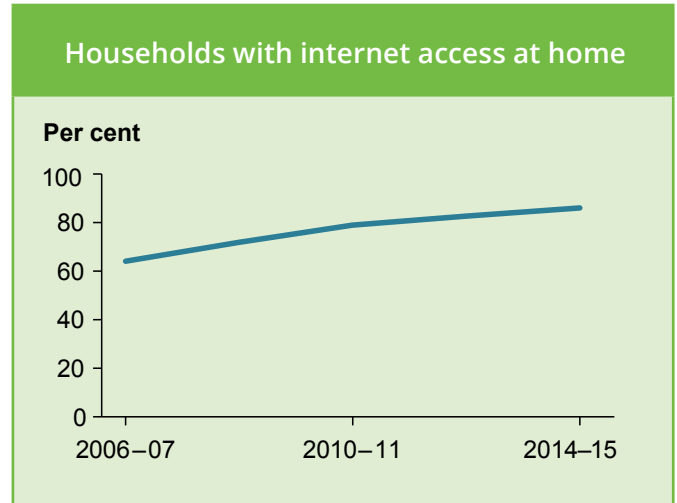
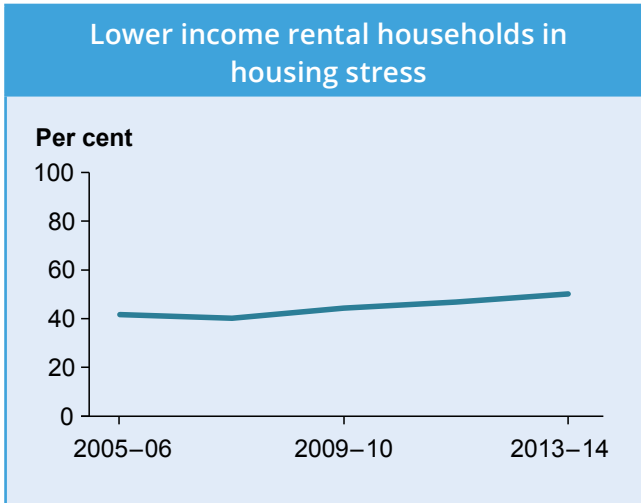


**Find out more:** Chapter 9.1 'The *Australia's welfare* indicator framework' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# What's trending

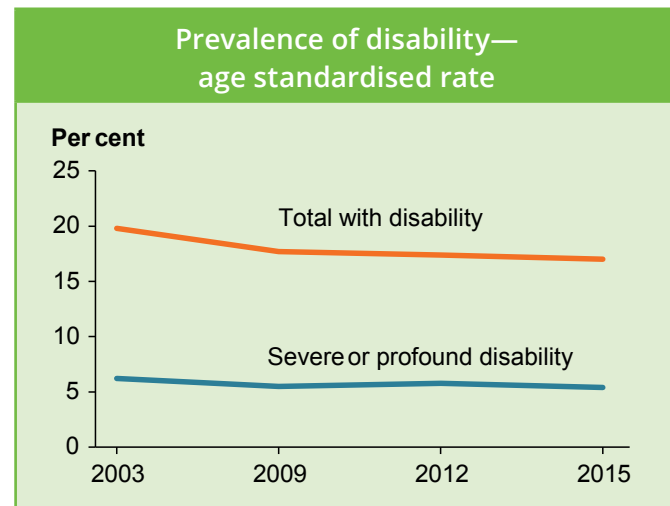
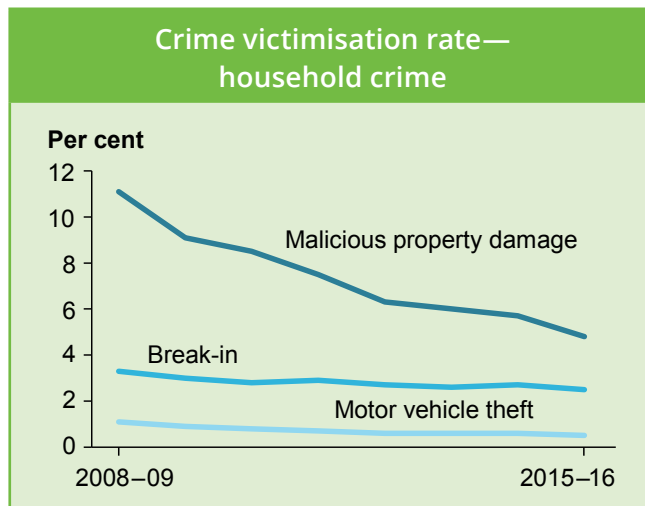
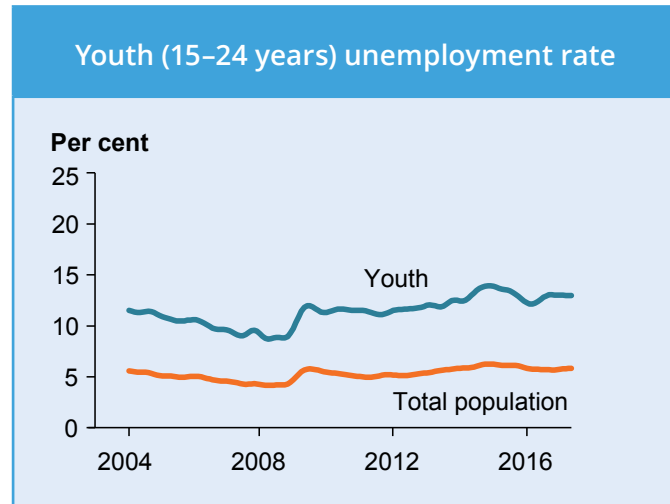
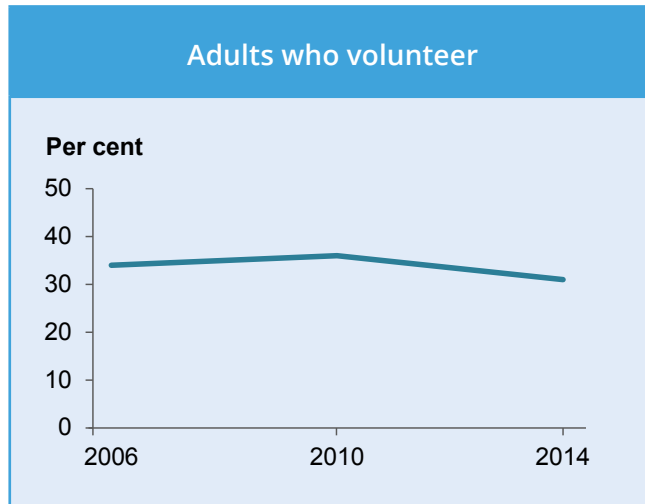
Trend data are presented for indicators wherever possible. Some examples are presented here.

■ trending in favourable direction    
 ■ trending in unfavourable direction



■ trending in favourable direction

■ trending in unfavourable direction









**Find out more:** Chapter 9.2 'Indicators of *Australia's welfare*' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

# Wellbeing—Australia’s ranking on global indexes

There is a lot of international interest in wellbeing, including ‘subjective wellbeing’ or ‘happiness’. Several summary measures are used to compare how countries are faring. An objective and a subjective measure are presented here.

Australia performs exceptionally well on the objective measure, the Human Development Index, which aggregates achievement in life expectancy, education and standard of living. We also rank highly on subjective wellbeing (happiness), when asked to evaluate the quality of our lives on a scale of 0 to 10.

## Country ranks for wellbeing measures, selected countries

Measure and year		World best	Australia	New Zealand	Canada	USA	UK
							
United Nations Human Development Index	2014	Norway	2	10	9	8	14
World happiness report	2017	Norway	9	8	6	14	19

**Find out more:** Chapter 9.1 ‘The *Australia’s welfare* indicator framework’ in *Australia’s welfare 2017*.

# Highlighting data

## Putting data together to tell a bigger story

In today's world of 'big data', governments, businesses, the community and individuals have access to an unprecedented volume and variety of data, at an ever-increasing rate.

The Productivity Commission's Inquiry on *Data availability and use* highlights the critical importance of using data to achieve positive social and economic outcomes and of working closely with the community to obtain 'social licence' to support this endeavour.

The **person-centred data model** illustrated here recognises that many factors affect a person's interaction with health and welfare services and supports. Making the most of available data across the full spectrum of health and welfare activity offers an opportunity to produce more meaningful, person-centred information. This evidence can provide a basis for better policy decisions and, ultimately, produce better outcomes for the Australian population.



**Find out more:** Chapter 1.7 'Understanding health and welfare data' in *Australia's welfare 2017*.

## There's always more to do!

Even with our best efforts, there are gaps in health and welfare data. For instance, data to understand a specific area of interest may not be collected. Further, major items may be missing from existing data collections, or not collected by all providers.

Gaps in data and evidence include:

- prevalence data; for example, the national prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Australia
- risks and drivers of specific behaviours and actions (such as family, domestic and sexual violence)
- meaningful outcomes data for people who receive, and agencies that fund, health and welfare services; for example, long-term outcomes for children in out-of-home care
- unmet demand for services; for example, disability services
- data on pathways and transitions within and across different service types, such as in and out of social housing, or because of being a victim of domestic violence
- comprehensive data about the welfare workforce on which to base decisions about future requirements.

The AIHW works closely with data providers to make better use of existing data and identify and prioritise data gaps across a range of sources.

## Filling the gaps

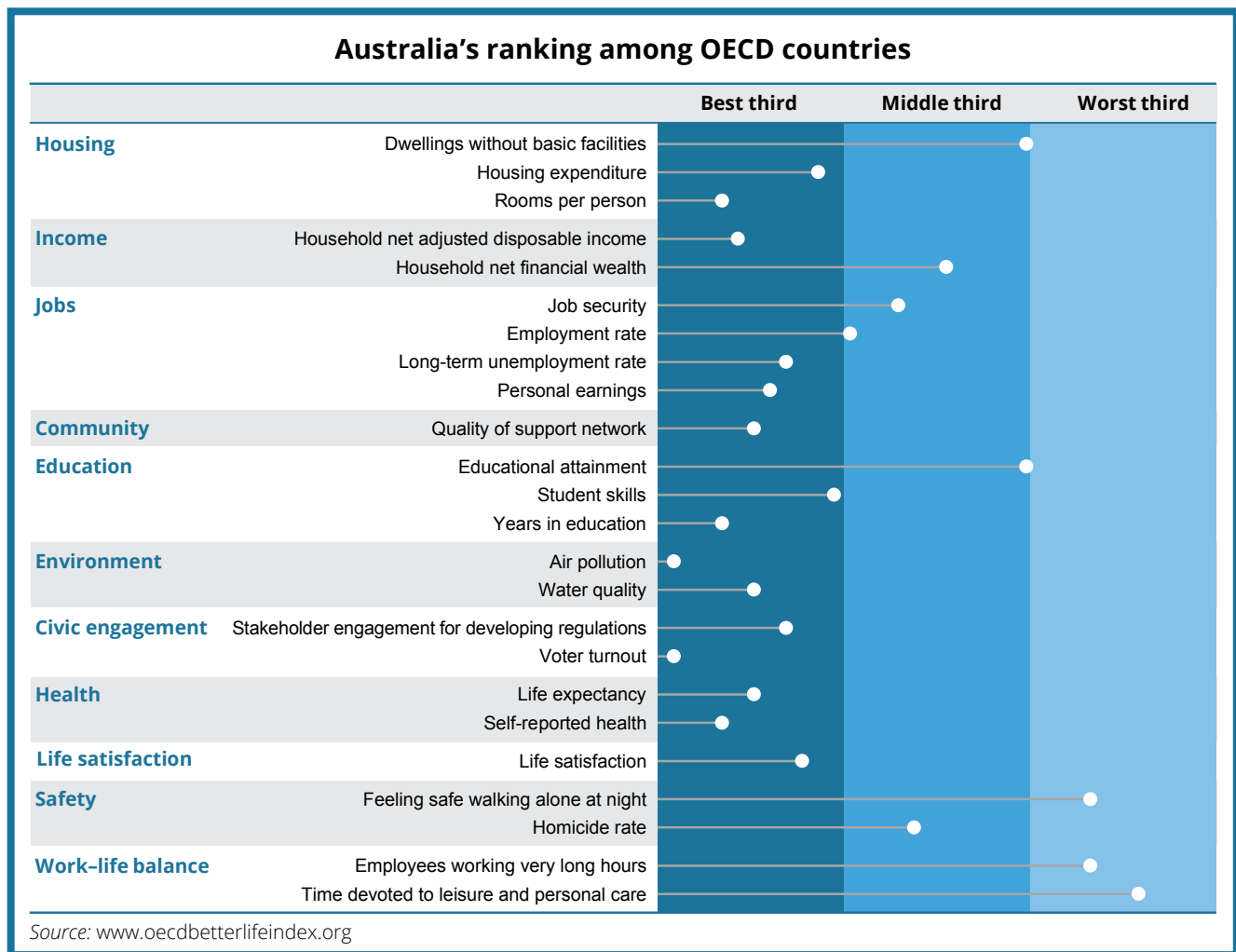
The AIHW is working to fill data gaps in several areas, including by:

- communicating directly with regional service agencies, such as Primary Health Networks, to identify specific gaps in information at the local level, along with strategies to fill them
- developing data clearinghouses in areas such as aged care, and family and domestic violence. This can help to coordinate national reporting, provide a platform for improving data scope and quality and facilitate researcher access to data
- using data linkage to enhance the value of existing sources to produce new and meaningful outcomes in a range of areas. This strategy offers potential to do much more.

**Find out more:** Chapter 1.7 'Understanding health and welfare data' in *Australia's welfare 2017*. Also, see the 'What is missing from the picture?' sections throughout the main report.

# How's life in Australia?—international comparison

Australia performs very well against many measures of wellbeing, compared with most other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 'Better Life Index'. We are number 1 (top ranked) for civic engagement, and are above average in income and wealth, environmental quality, health status, housing, jobs and earnings, education and skills, subjective wellbeing, and social connections. However we do not perform well in work-life balance and are in the worst third for working very long hours.







*Australia's welfare 2017: in brief* presents highlights from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 13th biennial report on the nation's welfare.

[aihw.gov.au](http://aihw.gov.au)



Stronger evidence,  
better decisions,  
improved health and welfare