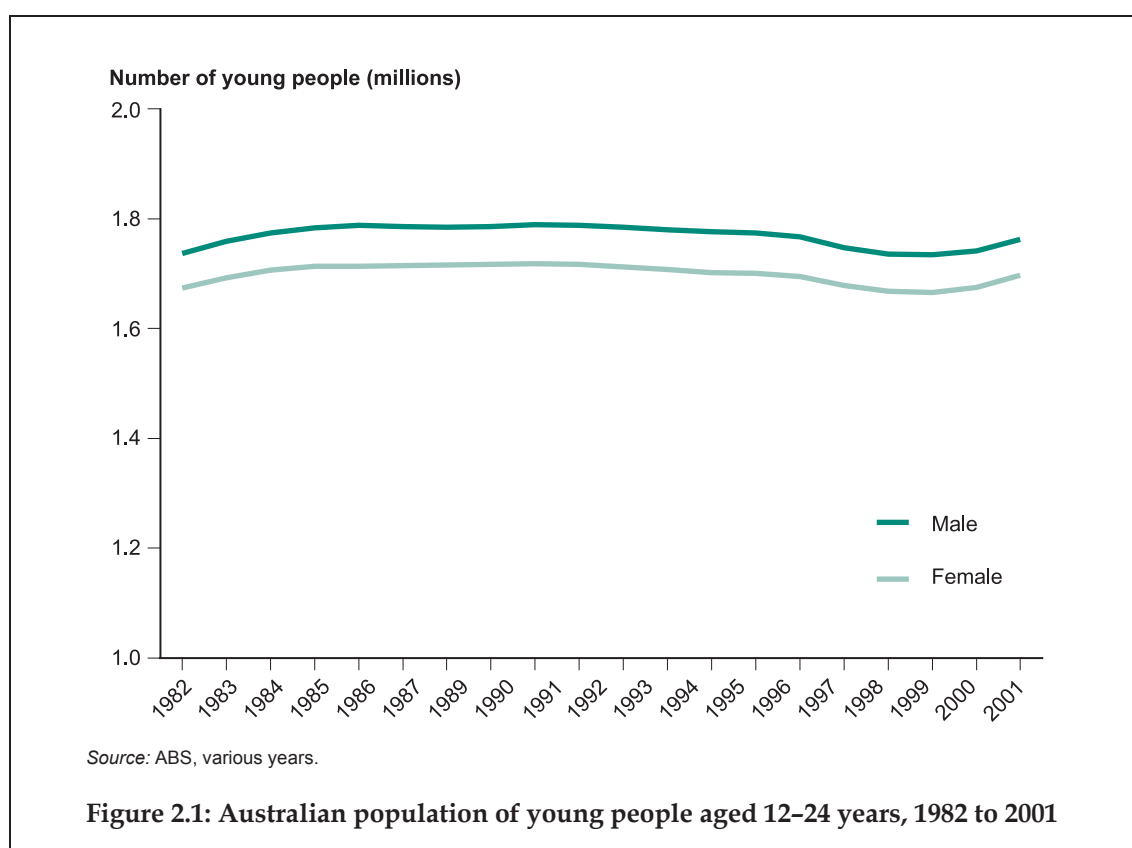


## 2. Population characteristics

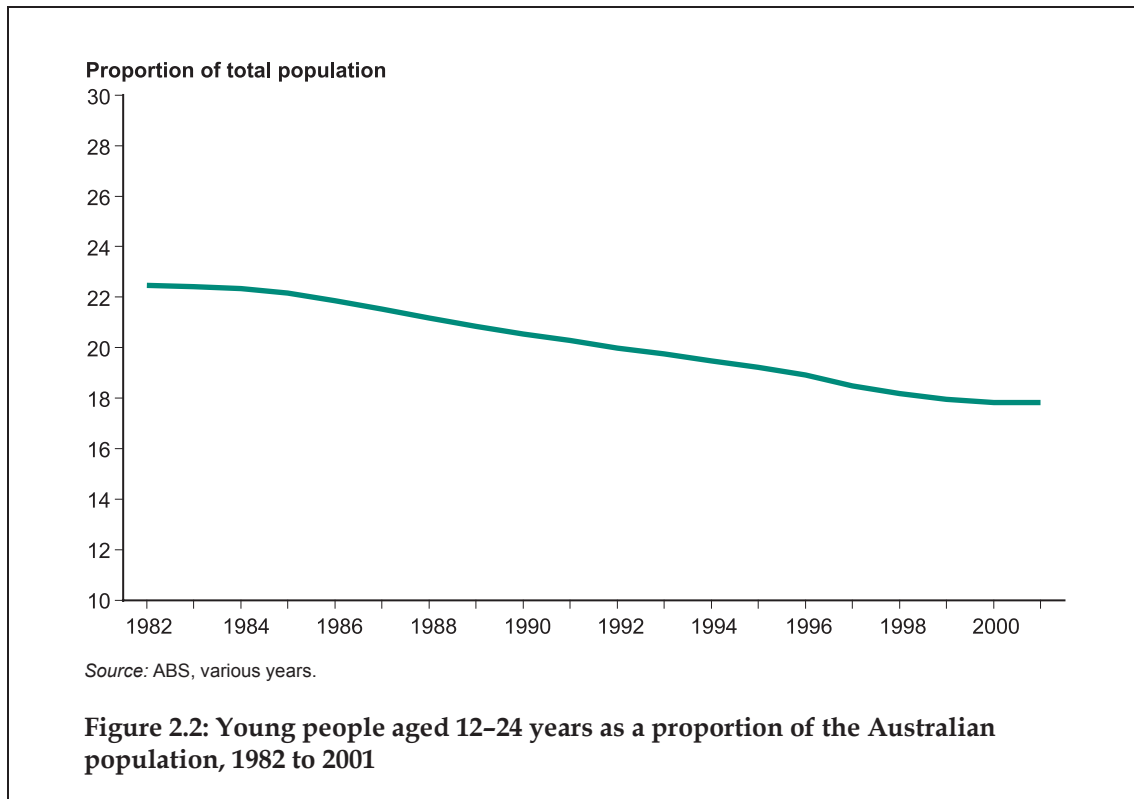
This chapter presents demographic information about young people aged 12–24 years using a number of key measures: the total number of young people, young people as a proportion of the total population, the age structure of the population of young people, young people in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, where young people reside, and the country of birth of young people. Many of these factors are related to health differentials and are consequently examined in this report in conjunction with health status.

### Number of young people



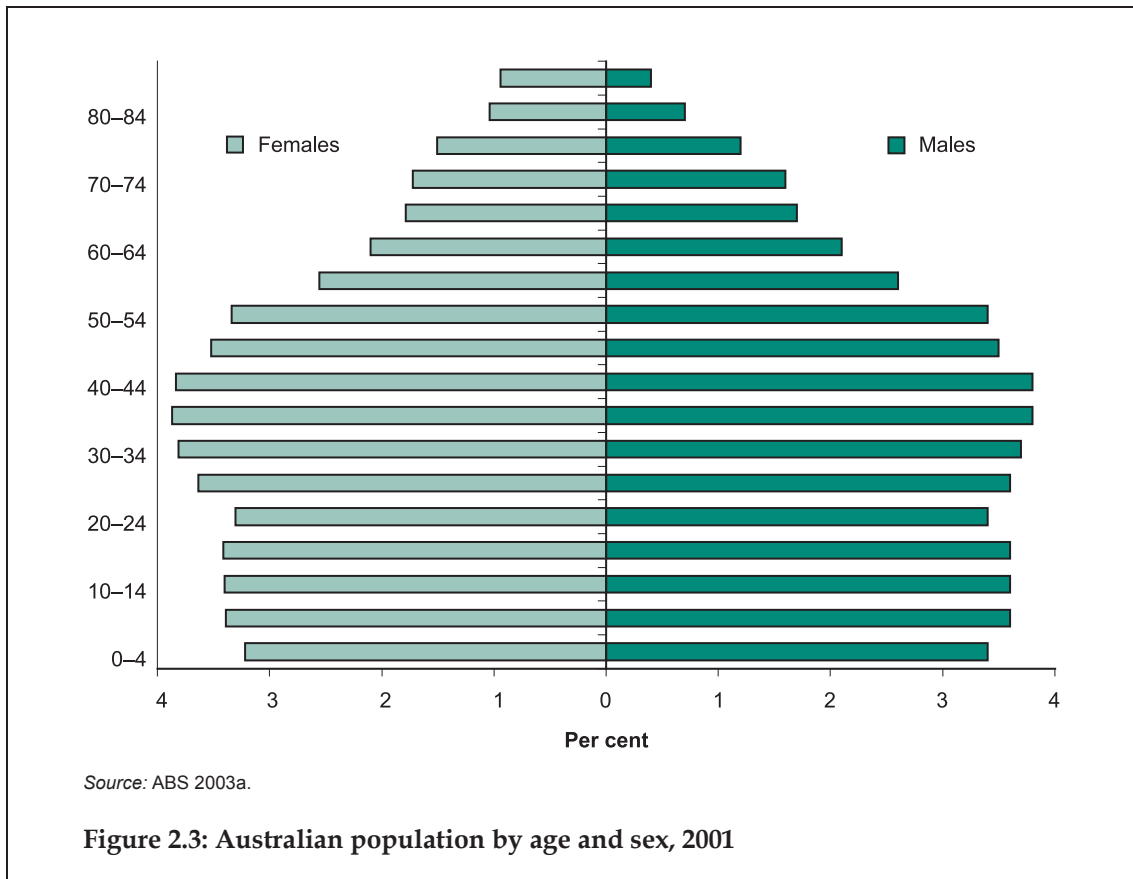
- At 30 June 2001, there were 3.5 million young people aged 12–24 years – 1.8 million males and 1.7 million females – whose usual residence is Australia.
- During this century, most of the increase in the number of young people occurred between 1950 and 1980. This was a consequence of an increase in the number of children born during the ‘baby boom’ in the years following the Second World War. The number of young people has been relatively stable over the last two decades.

## Proportion of the population



- At 30 June 2001, the total Australian population was 19,413,240, with young people aged 12-24 years (3,459,918) accounting for 18% of this total. This was the lowest percentage of the population ever.
- With declining fertility, the proportion of young people in the total population is projected to decline to 14% by the year 2032 (ABS 2000).

## Age and sex structure



- The population pyramid for the Australian population has a somewhat narrow base, reflecting the decline in fertility in the last 3 decades. The bulge in the middle reflects higher past fertility in the baby-boom years. The somewhat broad apex reflects low mortality rates among older Australians. The Australian population pyramid has also been shaped by net overseas migration. This type of pyramid is characteristic of developed industrialised countries.
- The Australian population has a median age of 35 years, which means that 50% of the population are aged less than 35 years.
- In 2001, the number of young people by single year of age ranged from 269,435 at age 12, to 271,934 at age 18, to 259,103 at age 24.
- Among young people, males are slightly more numerous than females for every age. The ratio of males per 100 females was 105 at age 12, 105 at age 18 and 102 at age 24. This reflects the higher male to female sex ratio at birth, where male births outnumber female births by 5%, and the higher male mortality from injuries between the ages of 18 and 24 years.

## Area of residence

### State and Territory

Table 2.1: Residence area of Australian young people aged 12–24 years, 2001

State/territory	Population aged 12–24 years	Total population	Percentage of state/territory population aged 12–24	Per cent distribution of Australian population aged 12–24	Per cent distribution of Australian population (all ages)
New South Wales	1,147,846	6,575,217	17.5	33.2	33.9
Victoria	845,751	4,804,726	17.6	24.4	24.7
Queensland	665,124	3,628,946	18.3	19.2	18.7
Western Australia	354,399	1,901,159	18.6	10.2	9.8
South Australia	258,866	1,511,728	17.1	7.5	7.8
Tasmania	82,658	471,795	17.5	2.4	2.4
Australian Capital Territory	64,597	319,317	20.2	1.9	1.6
Northern Territory	40,228	197,768	20.3	1.2	1.0
<b>Australia<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>3,459,918</b>	<b>19,413,240</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) Australian total includes 'other Australian territories'.

Source: ABS 2003a.

- At 30 June 2001, well over half of Australian young people (58%) lived in the two largest states – New South Wales and Victoria. This reflects the distribution of the total population.
- Within each jurisdiction, the proportion of the population aged 12–24 years varied, and ranged from 17% in South Australia to 20% in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

## Rural, remote and metropolitan areas

Different methods have been used over time to describe the rurality of the Australian population. Until recently, the RRMA classification (rural, remote and metropolitan areas) had been used almost exclusively to analyse administrative data collections such as the AIHW Mortality Database and the AIHW National Hospital Morbidity Database. The RRMA classification has seven levels and is based on the size of the local population centre as well as a measure of remoteness (DPIE & DSHS 1994).

More recently, however, the ABS developed the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Structure (DHAC & GISCA 1999; ABS 2001), which is used in Table 2.2 below.

**Table 2.2: Residence area of Australian young people aged 15–24 years, by ASGC, 2001**

	Young people aged 15–24 years	Proportion of total population of young people	Young people as a proportion of total population in this area	Total population in this area
Major cities of Australia	1,834,243	69.1	14.3	12,870,843
Inner regional Australia	510,157	19.2	12.7	4,025,689
Outer regional Australia	244,593	9.2	12.1	2,013,837
Remote Australia	39,055	1.5	12.0	324,329
Very remote Australia	27,108	1.0	15.2	178,542
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,655,157</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>19,413,240</b>

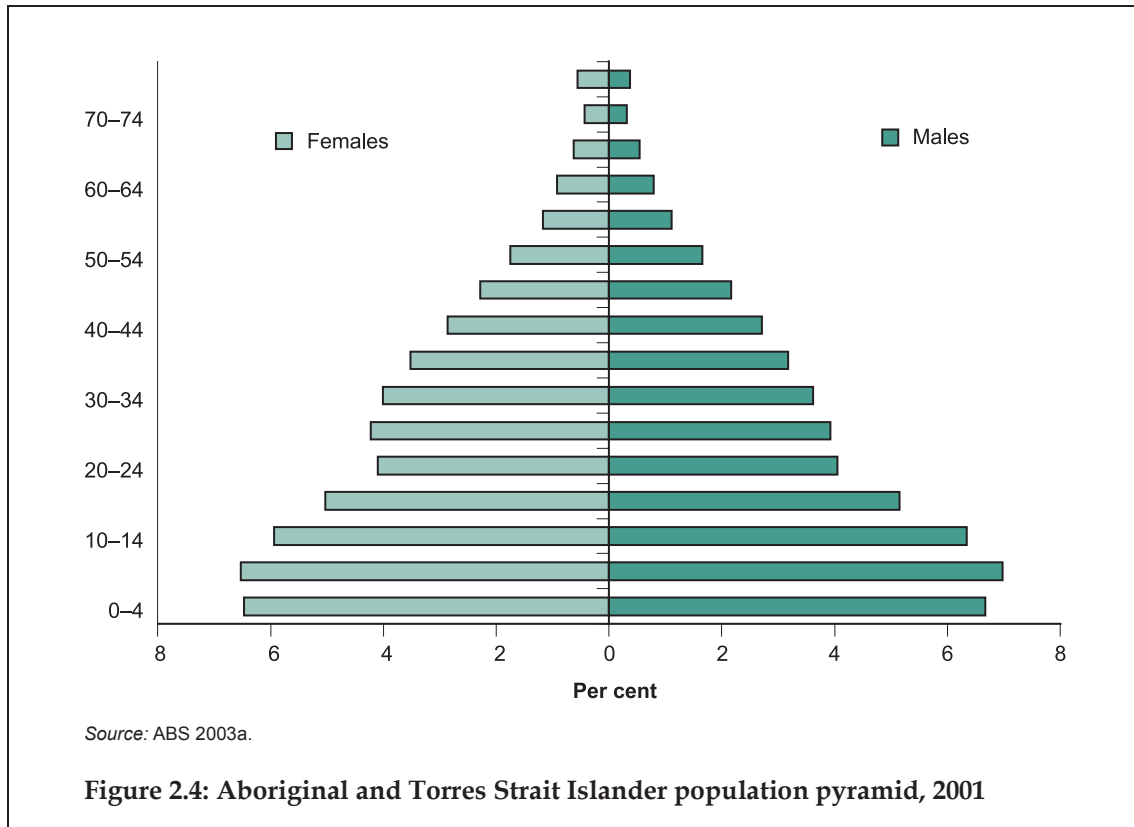
Note: Due to rounding, total may not equal the sum of residence categories.

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

- In 2001, nearly 70% of young people aged 15–24 years lived in major cities of Australia. Another 19% lived in inner regional areas. Around 12% of young people lived in outer regional and more remote areas of Australia.
- The very remote areas of Australia had a higher proportion of their population aged 15–24 years than the less remote areas. This is likely to be partly due to higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in more remote areas (the Indigenous population has a higher proportion of their population aged 12–24 years than the other Australian population (see Table 2.3).

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

The age and sex distribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is shown in Figure 2.4.



- The population pyramid for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians has a broad base and a narrow apex. This reflects the high birth rates and the high mortality rates experienced by this population. The shape of this pyramid is more characteristic of a developing country population than an industrialised country population.
- The Indigenous population has a median age of 20 years, which means that 50% of the population are aged below 20 years. Because of the high mortality throughout life, a much smaller proportion of Indigenous people live past 50 years, compared with other Australians – in 2001, 10% of Indigenous people were aged 50 years or more compared with 29% of other Australians.

**Table 2.3: Estimated number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 12–24 years as a proportion of the total Australian population, 2001**

Age (years)	Indigenous Australians		Other Australians		Indigenous population as a percentage of total population
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
12–14	32,710	7.1	772,051	4.1	4.1
15–17	29,213	6.4	810,995	4.1	3.6
18–24	54,775	11.9	1,789,387	9.4	3.0
12–24	116,698	25.5	3,343,220	17.8	3.3
Total population	458,520		18,954,720		2.4

Source: ABS 2003a.

- At 30 June 2001, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 12–24 years was estimated to be 116,698 – about 3% of the total number of young people in Australia.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people made up 26% of the total estimated Indigenous population of 458,520. The proportion of young people in the other Australian population was 18%.
- Of Indigenous young people aged 12–24 years, 47% were aged 18–24 years.

The distribution of Indigenous young people aged 12–24 years in the different states/territories is shown in Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4: Distribution of the Indigenous Australian population aged 12–24 years, by state and territory, 2001**

<b>State</b>	<b>Indigenous population aged 12–24 years</b>	<b>Proportion of Indigenous population aged 12–24 years</b>	<b>Indigenous population aged 12–24 years as a proportion of youth population of state or territory</b>	<b>Other Australian population aged 12–24 years</b>	<b>Proportion of other Australian population aged 12–24 years</b>	<b>Other Australian population aged 12–24 years as a proportion of total population of state or territory</b>
NSW	33,499	28.7	2.9	1,114,347	33.3	17.1
Vic	6,954	6.0	0.8	838,797	25.1	17.5
Qld	31,685	27.2	4.8	633,439	18.9	17.7
WA	16,966	14.5	4.8	337,433	10.1	18.0
SA	6,536	5.6	2.5	252,330	7.5	16.8
Tas	4,743	4.1	5.7	77,915	2.3	16.8
ACT	1,023	0.9	1.6	63,574	1.9	20.0
NT	15,237	13.1	37.9	24,991	0.7	14.4
<b>Australia</b>	<b>116,698</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3,343,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>17.4</b>

Source: ABS 2003a.

- Approximately 56% of the Indigenous population aged 12–24 lived in New South Wales and Queensland (29% and 27%, respectively), compared with 52% of the other Australian population in the same age group (33% and 19% in each state). A further 28% of Indigenous young people lived in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, compared with 11% of other Australian young people.
- In all states and territories except the Northern Territory, Indigenous young people constitute less than 6% of the total youth population. In the Northern Territory, over a third of young people were Indigenous.

## Place of birth and language spoken at home

Table 2.5: Birthplace of young people aged 12–24 years, 2001

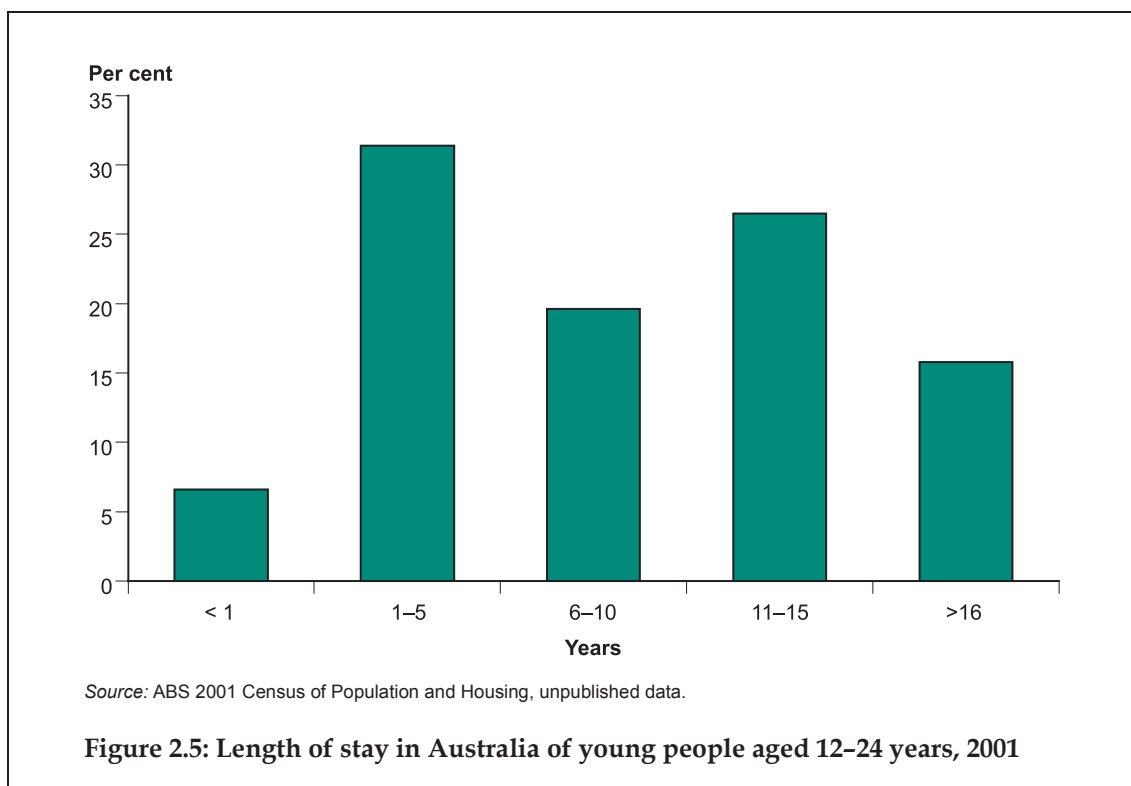
Place of birth	Number	Proportion of young people population
Australia	2,968,315	85.8
South-east Asia	111,032	3.2
New Zealand and Oceania	82,443	2.4
North-west Europe	71,693	2.1
North-east Asia	70,716	2.0
Southern and eastern Europe	40,414	1.2
Southern and central Asia	32,373	0.9
North Africa and the Middle East	29,370	0.8
Americas	27,203	0.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	26,359	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,459,918</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ABS 2003b.

- At 30 June 2001, 2.97 million or 86% of all young people resident in Australia were born in Australia.
- Of the 491,603 young people born overseas, the majority were born in Asia (6%) followed by New Zealand and Europe (including the United Kingdom and Ireland).

In 2001, the four main languages spoken at home by young people aged 12–24 were English (84%), Chinese (3%), Arabic (2%) and Vietnamese (1%). The proportion of young people speaking Italian, Greek or German was similar at 1% each. All the remaining languages were spoken by less than 1% of young people.

## Length of stay in Australia



- Census data on year of arrival can be used to estimate the length of stay in Australia. In 2001, among young people who arrived in Australia over the last two decades, 38% were recent arrivals: 7% arrived in 2001, and a further 31% arrived between 1996 and 2000, and had been in Australia for a period of less than 5 years.
- Just over a quarter (27%) of young people who were not born in Australia had been in Australia for a period of 11-15 years, and one in five had been in Australia for a period of 6-10 years.

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