

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 2001 and 30 June 2002. 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 non-government welfare agencies, are included only if these notifications were also referred to 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 2001 and 30 June 2002, 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 2001 and 30 June 2002 which was investigated and the investigation was completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2002.
 - *Investigation not finalised* – a notification received between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2002 which was investigated but where the investigation was not completed and an investigation outcome was not recorded by 31 August 2002.
- *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.
- *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.
- *Carer/family issues* (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.
- *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 2001–02 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 2001 and 30 June 2002 for each State and Territory is shown in Table 2.1. The number of notifications ranged from 55,208 in New South Wales to 508 in Tasmania.

The proportion of notifications that were investigated ranged from 96% in Western Australia to 35% 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 before 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, 2001–02

| Type of action | NSW ^(a) | Vic | Qld | WA ^(b) | SA | Tas | ACT | NT ^(c) |
|--|--------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| | Number | | | | | | | |
| Investigations finalised ^(d) | 26,255 | 12,868 | 14,638 | 2,427 | 5,615 | 396 | 522 | 824 |
| Investigations not finalised ^(e) | 7,363 | 343 | 8,396 | 510 | 18 | 57 | 128 | 11 |
| <i>Total investigations</i> | <i>33,618</i> | <i>13,211</i> | <i>23,034</i> | <i>2,937</i> | <i>5,633</i> | <i>453</i> | <i>650</i> | <i>835</i> |
| Dealt with by other means ^(f) | 21,590 | 24,765 | 3,489 | — | 5,570 | 11 | 18 | — |
| No investigation possible/no action ^(g) | — | — | 1,069 | 108 | — | 44 | 133 | 770 |
| Total notifications | 55,208 | 37,976 | 27,592 | 3,045 | 11,203 | 508 | 801 | 1,605 |
| | Per cent | | | | | | | |
| Investigations finalised ^(d) | 48 | 34 | 53 | 80 | 50 | 78 | 65 | 51 |
| Investigations not finalised ^(e) | 13 | 1 | 30 | 17 | — | 11 | 16 | 1 |
| <i>Total investigations</i> | <i>61</i> | <i>35</i> | <i>83</i> | <i>96</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>89</i> | <i>81</i> | <i>52</i> |
| Dealt with by other means ^(f) | 39 | 65 | 13 | — | 50 | 2 | 2 | — |
| No investigation possible/no action ^(g) | — | — | 4 | 4 | — | 9 | 17 | 48 |
| 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) 'Investigations not finalised' includes 69 cases where it is unknown whether there will be an investigation or not as data has not yet 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 investigations possible/no action'.

(d) 'Investigations finalised' is an investigation that was completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2002.

(e) 'Investigations not finalised' is an investigation that was begun but not completed by 31 August 2002.

(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, 40% of finalised investigations in Victoria and 51% in Western Australia were not substantiated (Table 2.2).

The proportion of investigations that were substantiated ranged from 33% in New South Wales to 69% in Queensland. 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 5% in Tasmania were classified as 'Carer/family issues'. In New South Wales this category refers to investigations where it was determined that no actual harm occurred but carer or family issues were involved, while in Tasmania it refers to situations where there were not enough grounds for substantiation but further involvement of the department was warranted.

Table 2.2: Outcomes of finalised investigations, by State and Territory, 2001-02

| | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Number | | | | | | | |
| Substantiation | 8,606 | 7,687 | 10,036 | 1,187 | 2,230 | 158 | 220 | 349 |
| Carer/family issues ^(a) | 5,944 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 19 | .. | .. |
| Not substantiated | 11,705 | 5,181 | 4,602 | 1,240 | 3,385 | 219 | 302 | 475 |
| Total finalised investigations | 26,255 | 12,868 | 14,638 | 2,427 | 5,615 | 396 | 522 | 824 |
| | Per cent | | | | | | | |
| Substantiation | 33 | 60 | 69 | 49 | 40 | 40 | 42 | 42 |
| Carer/family issues ^(a) | 23 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 5 | .. | .. |
| Not substantiated | 45 | 40 | 31 | 51 | 60 | 55 | 58 | 58 |
| Total finalised investigations | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

(a) In New South Wales this category comprises investigations where no actual harm occurred but there were carer/family issues. In Tasmania the category was used where there were reasonable grounds to suspect the possibility of previous or future abuse or neglect and further involvement of the department was warranted.

Recent trends in notifications and substantiations

In Australia, the number of child protection notifications increased by over 30,000 in the last 2 years, rising from 107,134 in 1999-00 to 137,938 in 2001-02 (Table 2.3). The number of notifications increased in all jurisdictions except South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. The number of substantiations also increased over the last 2 years from 24,732 in 1999-00 to 30,473 in 2001-02 (Table 2.4). The increase in the number of substantiations was concentrated in New South Wales and Queensland.

Table 2.3: Number of notifications, by State and Territory, 1999-00 to 2001-02

| Year | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT | Total |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|-------|----------------------|-----|-------|----------------------|---------|
| 1999-00 | 30,398 | 36,805 | 19,057 | 2,645 | 15,181 | 422 | 1,189 | 1,437 ^(a) | 107,134 |
| 2000-01 | 40,937 | 36,966 | 22,069 | 2,851 | 9,988 ^(b) | 315 | 794 | 1,551 | 115,471 |
| 2001-02 | 55,208 | 37,976 | 27,592 | 3,045 | 11,203 | 508 | 801 | 1,605 | 137,938 |

(a) 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.

(b) 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.

Sources: AIHW 2002; Table 2.1.

Increases in the number of notifications or substantiations may be due to changes in legislation, policies and practices within jurisdictions. Much of the increase in the number of notifications and substantiations in New South Wales over the last 2 years was likely to be due to the introduction of new legislation which came into effect in 2000-01 and was fully operational in 2001-02. This expanded the categories of risk of harm, extended the number of professionals and agencies mandated to report, and introduced a centralised intake system. Similarly, the recent increase in notifications and substantiations in Queensland coincided with the trial of a centralised intake system in three departmental regions.

The increase in the numbers of notifications and substantiations may also indicate an increase in the number of children who require a child protection response. This may be due to an increase in the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the community or inadequate parenting causing harm to a child.

Table 2.4: Number of substantiations, by State and Territory, 1999–00 to 2001–02

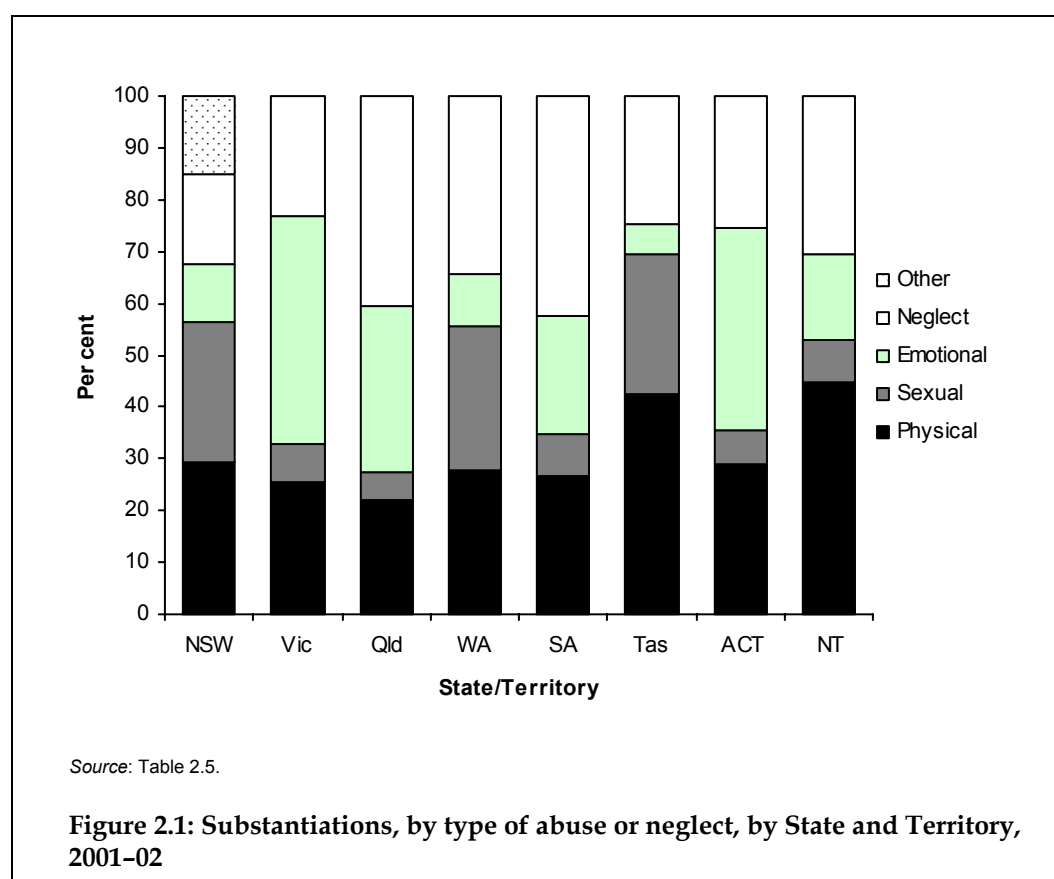
| Year | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT | Total |
|---------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| 1999–00 | 6,477 | 7,359 | 6,919 | 1,169 | 2,085 | 97 | 233 | 393 | 24,732 |
| 2000–01 | 7,501 | 7,608 | 8,395 | 1,191 | 1,998 | 103 | 222 | 349 | 27,367 |
| 2001–02 | 8,606 | 7,687 | 10,036 | 1,187 | 2,230 | 158 | 220 | 349 | 30,473 |

Sources: AIHW 2002; Table 2.2.

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, 2001-02

| Type of abuse or neglect substantiated | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|--|----------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Number | | | | | | | | |
| Physical | 2,539 | 1,951 | 2,217 | 330 | 596 | 67 | 64 | 156 |
| Sexual | 2,301 | 564 | 536 | 330 | 175 | 43 | 14 | 29 |
| Emotional | 965 | 3,402 | 3,206 | 120 | 508 | 9 | 86 | 57 |
| Neglect | 1,511 | 1,770 | 4,077 | 407 | 951 | 39 | 56 | 107 |
| Other ^(a) | 1,290 ^(a) | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| Total substantiations | 8,606 | 7,687 | 10,036 | 1,187 | 2,230 | 158 | 220 | 349 |
| Per cent | | | | | | | | |
| Physical | 30 | 25 | 22 | 28 | 27 | 42 | 29 | 45 |
| Sexual | 27 | 7 | 5 | 28 | 8 | 27 | 6 | 8 |
| Emotional | 11 | 44 | 32 | 10 | 23 | 6 | 39 | 16 |
| Neglect | 18 | 23 | 41 | 34 | 43 | 25 | 25 | 31 |
| Other ^(a) | 15 ^(a) | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| 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 2001-02 in New South Wales there were 55,208 notifications compared with 39,478 children who were the subject of a notification, and 8,606 substantiations compared with 7,402 children who were the subject of a substantiation (Table 2.6).

These data indicate that a number of children across Australia were the subject of more than one substantiation during 2001-02. It is not possible to calculate the exact proportion of children who were the subject of more than one notification or substantiation, however, as some children may be the subject of more than two notifications or substantiations in the year.

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, 2001–02

| | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-----|-----|-------|
| Children in notifications | 39,478 | 28,754 | 19,575 | 2,748 | 8,097 | 477 | 685 | 1,354 |
| Total notifications | 55,208 | 37,976 | 27,592 | 3,045 | 11,203 | 508 | 801 | 1,605 |
| Children in substantiations | 7,402 | 7,206 | 7,392 | 1,113 | 1,766 | 154 | 203 | 333 |
| Total substantiations | 8,606 | 7,687 | 10,036 | 1,187 | 2,230 | 158 | 220 | 349 |

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

Sex and age

In all jurisdictions girls were more likely to be the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse (Table A1.1) There were about three times as many girls as boys who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse. On the other hand, boys were more likely to be the subject of a substantiation of physical abuse.

In relation to age, the numbers of children who were the subject of a substantiation was larger in the younger age categories and there were 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 between States and Territories in the rates of children who were the subject of a child protection substantiation. In 2001–02 Queensland and Victoria had the highest rates of children who were the subject of a substantiation: 8.3 per 1,000 children in Queensland and 6.5 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: 2.4 and 1.4 per 1,000 respectively.

Much of the variation in rates across jurisdictions is likely to be due to differences in policies and approaches to child protection matters. The relatively low rates of children in substantiations in Western Australia and Tasmania is because reports relating to concerns about children that do not involve maltreatment are screened out of the child protection system and dealt with separately. The high rates in Victoria and Queensland are in part related to the broader definition of child abuse and neglect or harm used in these jurisdictions.

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 2001–02

| 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 |
| 2001–02 | 4.8 | 6.5 | 8.3 | 2.4 | 5.3 | 1.4 | 2.7 | 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.

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

Sources: AIHW 2002; Table 2.9.

Trends in rates of children in substantiations

The trends in rates of children in substantiations also varied across jurisdictions. In the period 1996–97 to 2001–02, rates of children in substantiations increased in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The increase in rates of children in substantiations was largest in Queensland where they rose from 4.2 to 8.3 per 1,000 (Table 2.7).

Rates by age

Rates of children who were the subjects of substantiations generally decreased with age. In all jurisdictions except New South Wales, children aged under 1 year were the most likely to be the subject of a substantiation and children aged 15–16 years the least likely (Table 2.8). In Victoria, for instance, the rate for children aged under 1 year was 11.1 per 1,000 compared with 5.2 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. The High Risk Infants Service Quality Initiatives Project in Victoria, for example, 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 (VDHS 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, 2001–02

| Age (years) | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|-------------|-----|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| <1 year | 4.5 | 11.1 | 15.6 | 4.8 | 8.8 | 1.8 | 6.5 | 11.6 |
| 1–4 years | 4.2 | 7.4 | 9.8 | 2.5 | 5.6 | 1.6 | 3.0 | 7.1 |
| 5–9 years | 5.0 | 6.2 | 8.6 | 2.7 | 5.9 | 1.1 | 3.0 | 5.1 |
| 10–14 years | 5.3 | 5.8 | 7.6 | 2.1 | 4.8 | 1.0 | 2.2 | 5.3 |
| 15–16 years | 3.9 | 5.2 | 3.3 | 1.2 | 2.4 | 0.6 | 1.1 | 2.6 |

Notes

1. Refer to Table A1.2 for numbers for this table.
2. Due to the small numbers involved, children aged 17 years were not included in this table.

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 2001–02 in all jurisdictions except Tasmania, the substantiation rate for Indigenous children was higher than the rate for other children (Table 2.9). The rate ratio provides a summary measure of the rate of Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiation compared with the rate for other children. In Victoria and Western Australia, the rate of Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiation was nearly eight times higher than the rate for other children.

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, 2001–02

| State/Territory | Number of children | | | Rate per 1,000 children | | | Rate ratio Indigenous /other |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------|-------|-------------------------|-------|-------|------------------------------------|
| | Indigenous | Other | Total | Indigenous | Other | Total | |
| New South Wales | 913 | 6,361 | 7,274 | 15.3 | 4.3 | 4.8 | 3.6:1 |
| Victoria | 579 | 6,569 | 7,148 | 48.1 | 6.1 | 6.5 | 7.9:1 |
| Queensland | 795 | 6,553 | 7,348 | 14.3 | 7.9 | 8.3 | 1.8:1 |
| Western Australia ^(a) | 386 | 718 | 1,104 | 13.5 | 1.7 | 2.4 | 7.9:1 |
| South Australia | 346 | 1,407 | 1,753 | 31.6 | 4.4 | 5.3 | 7.2:1 |
| Tasmania | 2 | 151 | 153 | 0.3 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 0.2:1 |
| Australian Capital Territory | 11 | 191 | 202 | 6.5 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.5:1 |
| Northern Territory | 222 | 109 | 331 | 9.7 | 3.2 | 5.8 | 3.0:1 |

(a) During 2001–02 practices were introduced to improve the identification of Indigenous status that resulted in an increase in the number of Indigenous clients.

Notes

1. Due to the small numbers involved, children aged 17 years were not included in this table.
2. The Indigenous rates for 2002 were calculated using 2001 Census data. These rates should not be compared with the Indigenous rates published for previous years.

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
- cultural differences in child-rearing practices.

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 of neglect than other children. For example, in Western Australia 50% of Indigenous children in substantiations were the subject of a substantiation of neglect, compared with 24% of other children. In Queensland the corresponding percentages were 50% and 37% respectively (Table 2.10).

Table 2.10: Children who were the subject of a substantiation: type of abuse or neglect, by Indigenous status and State and Territory, 2001-02 (per cent)

| Type of abuse or neglect | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Indigenous children | | | | | | | | |
| Physical abuse | 31 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 30 | 100 | 18 | 43 |
| Sexual abuse | 17 | 4 | 5 | 15 | 4 | — | 9 | 9 |
| Emotional abuse | 13 | 49 | 21 | 9 | 27 | — | 45 | 12 |
| Neglect | 26 | 24 | 50 | 50 | 39 | — | 27 | 36 |
| Other ^(a) | 13 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Other children | | | | | | | | |
| Physical abuse | 29 | 26 | 24 | 29 | 32 | 42 | 29 | 45 |
| Sexual abuse | 30 | 8 | 6 | 37 | 10 | 28 | 5 | 9 |
| Emotional abuse | 10 | 44 | 33 | 11 | 23 | 6 | 40 | 25 |
| Neglect | 15 | 23 | 37 | 24 | 35 | 24 | 26 | 20 |
| Other ^(a) | 15 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| 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 2001-02 were school personnel, police and parents or guardians (Table 2.11). In New South Wales, for instance, school personnel were the source of the notifications for 23% of finalised investigations, police were the source of 22% and parents/guardians were the source of 10%.

Table 2.11: Finalised investigations, by source of notification and State and Territory, 2001–02 (per cent)

| Source of notification | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Subject child | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | — | 1 |
| Parent/guardian | 10 | 10 | 16 | 11 | 10 | 15 | 11 | 8 |
| Sibling | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Other relative | 5 | 7 | 12 | 12 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 14 |
| Friend/neighbour | 6 | 6 | 16 | 7 | 11 | 5 | 9 | 10 |
| Medical practitioner | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 7 |
| Other health personnel | 5 | 5 | 1 | — | 2 | 8 | 2 | 2 |
| Hospital/health centre | 7 | 5 | 6 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Social worker | 8 | 2 | 5 | — | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| School personnel | 23 | 16 | 11 | 13 | 18 | 18 | 13 | 12 |
| Childcare personnel | 1 | 1 | 1 | n.a. | — | 1 | — | 2 |
| Police | 22 | 19 | 13 | 13 | 17 | 10 | 12 | 14 |
| Departmental officer | — | 6 | 3 | 13 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 6 |
| Non-government organisation | 3 | 14 | 3 | 4 | — | 7 | 13 | 5 |
| Anonymous | 4 | — | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | — |
| Other | 3 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Notes

1. "Other" category may include the person responsible.
2. Refer to Table A1.4 for numbers for this table.

Family type

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

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 South Australia 43% of substantiations involved children from female-headed one-parent families, 19% involved children from two-parent step- or blended families, 5% involved children living in male-headed sole-parent families, while 30% involved children from two-parent intact families (Table 2.12). 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 children in substantiations, they represent only a small proportion of all children in this family type. In South Australia, for example, the rate of substantiations for children in female sole-parent families was 17.2 per 1,000 (Table 2.12, 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

- have less support in their immediate family.

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

Table 2.12: Substantiations, by type of family in which the child was residing, for selected States and Territories^(a), 2001-02

| Family type | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Number | | | | | | |
| Two parent—intact | 2,163 | 2,357 | 312 | 656 | 46 | 58 | 98 |
| Two parent—step or blended | 899 | 2,233 | 221 | 430 | 29 | 44 | 36 |
| Single parent—female | 2,630 | 4,229 | 430 | 954 | 65 | 64 | 139 |
| Single parent—male | 389 | 428 | 73 | 113 | 5 | 6 | 27 |
| Other relatives/kin | 469 | 211 | 73 | 39 | 2 | 2 | 34 |
| Foster | 97 | n.a. | 38 | 6 | 2 | 2 | — |
| Other | 376 | 556 | 26 | 22 | 9 | 2 | 7 |
| Not stated | 664 | 22 | 14 | 10 | — | 42 | 8 |
| Total | 7,687 | 10,036 | 1,187 | 2,230 | 158 | 220 | 349 |
| | Per cent | | | | | | |
| Two parent—intact | 31 | 24 | 27 | 30 | 29 | 33 | 29 |
| Two parent—step or blended | 13 | 22 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 25 | 11 |
| Single parent—female | 37 | 42 | 37 | 43 | 41 | 36 | 41 |
| Single parent—male | 6 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| Other relatives/kin | 7 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 10 |
| Foster | 1 | n.a. | 3 | — | 1 | 1 | — |
| Other | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 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, neglect or harm 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 considered 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 5% of the substantiations (Table 2.13).

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 56% of substantiations, friends or neighbours were believed to be responsible in 13% of substantiations and strangers (included in the 'other' category) were believed to be

responsible for a small proportion of substantiations. In addition, in most jurisdictions (for example South Australia) the substantiations data does not include those matters that are solely investigated by Police, such as sexual abuse by a person outside the family.

Table 2.13: Substantiations, by relationship to the child of person believed responsible, for selected States and Territories^(a), 2001–02

| Relationship | NSW | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT ^(b) |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| Number | | | | | | | |
| Biological parent | 2,813 | 8,340 | 770 | 1,808 | 64 | 175 | 219 |
| Step-parent | 341 | 463 | 72 | 127 | 22 | 12 | 9 |
| De facto step-parent | 205 | 394 | 58 | 78 | 7 | 21 | 17 |
| Sibling | 198 | 99 | 24 | 71 | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| Other relative/kin | 398 | 271 | 73 | 66 | 10 | 1 | 16 |
| Foster parent | 95 | 171 | 11 | — | 3 | 2 | — |
| Friend/neighbour | 651 | 25 | 54 | 30 | 10 | 3 | — |
| Other ^(c) | 307 | 123 | 55 | 50 | 13 | 1 | 6 |
| Not stated ^(d) | 3,598 ^(c) | 150 | 70 | — | 27 | 1 | 6 |
| Total | 8,606 | 10,036 | 1,187 | 2,230 | 158 | 220 | 281 |
| Per cent | | | | | | | |
| Biological parent | 56 | 84 | 69 | 81 | 49 | 80 | 80 |
| Step-parent | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 17 | 5 | 3 |
| De facto step-parent | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 6 |
| Sibling | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Other relative/kin | 8 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 8 | — | 6 |
| Foster parent | 2 | 2 | 1 | — | 2 | 1 | — |
| Friend/neighbour | 13 | — | 5 | 1 | 8 | 1 | — |
| Other ^(c) | 6 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 10 | — | 2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

(a) Victoria could not provide these data.

(b) The Northern Territory was unable to determine person believed responsible where there were more than one offender. The data relate to substantiations where there was only one offender.

(c) 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.

(d) This category includes cases where the person believed responsible was not applicable, not stated or unknown.