

Child protection Australia 2023–24

Web report | Last updated: 27 Mar 2026 | Topic: [Child protection](#)

About

Child protection Australia 2023–24 consists of an initial report followed by 3 updates, each focusing on a specific area of interest in child protection systems.

- 25 June 2025: This initial report, Insights, provides an overview of children in the child protection system in 2023–24, including children subject to notifications, investigations, and substantiations of maltreatment, and the ways children were supported.
- 30 September 2025: The first update, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, presents data on First Nations children in the child protection system. The data also include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) indicators.
- 11 December 2025: The second update, Safety of children in care, presents data on the safety and abuse of children in care.
- 26 March 2026: The final update, Pathways from out-of-home care, focusses on children leaving out-of-home care. The update also includes the release of the Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators and the National Out-of-Home Care indicators.

Cat. no: CWS 99

Key findings

- In 2023–24, about 179,000 children came into contact with the system, a decrease from about 180,000 in 2022–23
- Between 30 June 2020 and 30 June 2024, the rate of children in out-of-home care remained stable around 8.0 per 1,000
- 85% of First Nations children who were reunified in 2022–23 did not return to out-of-home care in 2023–24
- Since 2020–21, the number of children with a substantiation of abuse in care has increased by 13% from 1,300 to 1,500

Child protection system in Australia

In this section

- Introduction
- The child protection system
- Children in the child protection system
- Child protection services
- Where do I go for more information?

Child protection refers to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and harmful practices against children (UNICEF 2021). When children cannot live safely at home, child protection systems prioritise children's physical, mental and psychosocial needs to safeguard their lives and futures (UNICEF 2021). Child protection functions to protect the fundamental rights of children which include safety, freedom from violence and a stable family environment (UN General Assembly 1989).

The child protection system aims to protect children from maltreatment in family settings.

Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (WHO 2020).

For more information, see [The process of determining child maltreatment](#).

The child protection system

In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for statutory child protection. Relevant departments support vulnerable children:

- who have been, or are at risk of being, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed
- whose parents are unable to provide adequate care or protection.

This report looks at children aged under 18 years who came into contact with the child protection system in 2023–24. This includes being:

- subjects of investigations for alleged child maltreatment notifications
- on a care and protection order, which gives child protection departments partial or full legal responsibility for their welfare
- placed in out-of-home care as they were unable to live at home due to child safety concerns.

For more information, see [Supporting children](#).

Children in the child protection system

In 2023–24, around 1 in 31 (179,000) Australian children aged under 18 came into contact with the child protection system. About 1 in 137 (42,100) Australian children aged under 18 became subjects of substantiated maltreatment. That is, an investigation concluded that they were being, or were at risk of being, maltreated.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables 2.2 and S3.3

Table 1: Summary of children in the child protection system, 2023–24

Component of the child protection system	Number of events	Number of children
Notifications of alleged maltreatment	530,000	307,000
Notifications resolved without an investigation	322,000	171,000
Investigations of alleged maltreatment notifications	196,000	121,000
Substantiated maltreatment	56,800	42,100
Not substantiated allegation of maltreatment	74,000	56,200
Investigation in process	52,500	12,300
Care and protection orders	39,000	70,100
Out-of-home care placements	122,000	55,300
Child protection system	357,000	179,000

Notes

1. 'Number of events' includes the total occurrences of the specific component of the child protection system.
2. For the 'Number of children' count, a child is counted only once, even if they had multiple occurrences of the event during the year.
3. For care and protection orders, the number of events are orders that were issued in 2023–24, while the number of children are those who had an ongoing care and protection order during 2023–24.
4. For readability, numbers have been rounded.

Child protection services

Nationally, the focus is increasingly on early intervention and family support services to:

- help prevent children entering or returning to the child protection system
- minimise the need for more intrusive interventions (Bromfield & Holzer 2008; DSS 2021).

Most jurisdictions have enacted strategies that help families in a more holistic way, by:

- coordinating family support service delivery
- providing better access to different types of child and family services (DSS 2021).

For information on the performance of governments in providing child protection services across Australia, see the [Report on Government Services 2025](#).

Where do I go for more information?

For more information on child protection in Australia, see:

- [State and territory departments responsible for child protection](#)
- [Department of Social Services](#).

For more on this topic, see [Child protection](#).

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2022) [National framework for protecting Australia's children indicators](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 6 February 2025.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2024) [Child Protection Australia 2023–24: Insights](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 6 February 2025.

Bromfield L & Holzer P (2008) [A National Approach for Child Protection: Project Report](#), Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Government, accessed 6 February 2025.

DSS (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Social Services) (2021) [Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031](#), DSS, Australian Government, accessed 6 February 2025.

UN General Assembly (United Nations) (1989) [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), UN General Assembly, accessed 6 February 2025.

UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund) (2021) [Child Protection Strategy 2021–2030](#), UNICEF, accessed 6 February 2025.

WHO (World Health Organization) (2020) [Child maltreatment](#), WHO, accessed 6 February 2025.

Insights

The process of determining child maltreatment

In 2023–24:

307,000 children were subjects of notifications of alleged maltreatment.

121,000 children became subjects of investigations.

42,100 children in finalised investigations were subjects of substantiations of maltreatment.

Supporting children

In 2023–24, 33,300 children commenced intensive family support services.

At 30 June 2024, 59,900 children were on care and protection orders.

From 2019–20 to 2023–24, the number of children admitted to orders per year decreased from 13,100 to 10,100

At 30 June 2024, 44,900 children were in out-of-home care.

The process of determining child maltreatment

In this section

- Introduction
- How many children were subjects of notifications and investigations?
- How many children were subjects of substantiated maltreatment?
- Has the number of children in the system changed over time?

Introduction

Key findings

In 2023–24:

- 307,000 children were subjects of notifications of alleged maltreatment.
- 121,000 children became subjects of investigations.
- 42,100 children in finalised investigations were subjects of substantiations of maltreatment.

Notifications, investigations, and substantiations are the entry point for children into the child protection system. These components are sequential:

1. A notification of alleged child maltreatment is made to a child protection department.
2. If the notification meets the threshold for further action, an investigation of the alleged maltreatment is conducted.
3. The investigation ends with a substantiation decision about whether there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been, is being, or is at risk or significant risk of being, maltreated.

Refer to the Appendices for more information on the notifications, investigations, and substantiations components of the child protection system.

The data in this section relate to children for whom notifications were made about them to child protection departments between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024.

Due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect, operate and report on notifications, investigations and substantiations, data are not comparable between jurisdictions. Data produced from the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set based on nationally agreed specifications might not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and might not be comparable with data for previous years. Refer to the Appendices for more information on differences in jurisdictions' policy and practice.

How many children were subjects of notifications and investigations?

In 2023–24, 307,000 children were subjects of notifications (53 per 1,000).

The most common sources of notifications were:

- school personnel (28% or 86,300)
- police (21% or 63,000)
- medical or health personnel (11% or 32,700).

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table T1; Unpublished data from the AIHW Child Protection Collection

The child protection collection may contain multiple notifications for a child relating to different events of alleged maltreatment, or a different person believed responsible. Of children who were subjects of notifications, about one-third (33% or 99,300) were subjects of 2 or more notifications for different events of alleged child maltreatment. Each event involves a single notification made to a child protection department.

Source: Unpublished data from the AIHW Child Protection Collection

In 2023–24, of the children who were subjects of notifications, just over half (56% or 171,000) had their notifications resolved without an investigation. Of these:

- more than half (59% or 102,000) did not require further action
- about one-third (33% or 56,500) were provided with advice or referred to other services
- about 7.7% (13,100) required other intervention.

Source: Unpublished data from the AIHW Child Protection Collection

About 39% (121,000) of children who had notifications made about them became subjects of investigations. Of these:

- the majority (82% or 98,300) had a finalised investigation with an outcome of either substantiated (43% or 42,100) or not substantiated (57% or 56,200)
- about 10% (12,300) had an investigation in process
- about 8.3% (10,000) had an investigation closed with no outcome possible, for example, in cases where families have relocated.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S3.3

In 2023–24, about 4,600 children were awaiting an assessment decision on whether to undertake an investigation.

Source: Unpublished data from the AIHW Child Protection Collection

How many children were subjects of substantiated maltreatment?

In 2023–24, about 43% (42,100) of children in finalised investigations were subjects of substantiations of maltreatment. Of these:

- 13,000 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (33 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children)
- 27,500 were non-Indigenous children (5.1 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children).

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables S3.3 and S3.9

The higher rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection substantiations is complex, and may have been affected by:

- the legacy of past policies of forced removal
- intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture
- a higher likelihood of living in the lowest socioeconomic areas
- perceptions arising from cultural differences in child-rearing (HREOC 1997).

More information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will be included in the report over the coming months.

Characteristics of children with substantiated maltreatment

For children who were subjects of substantiations:

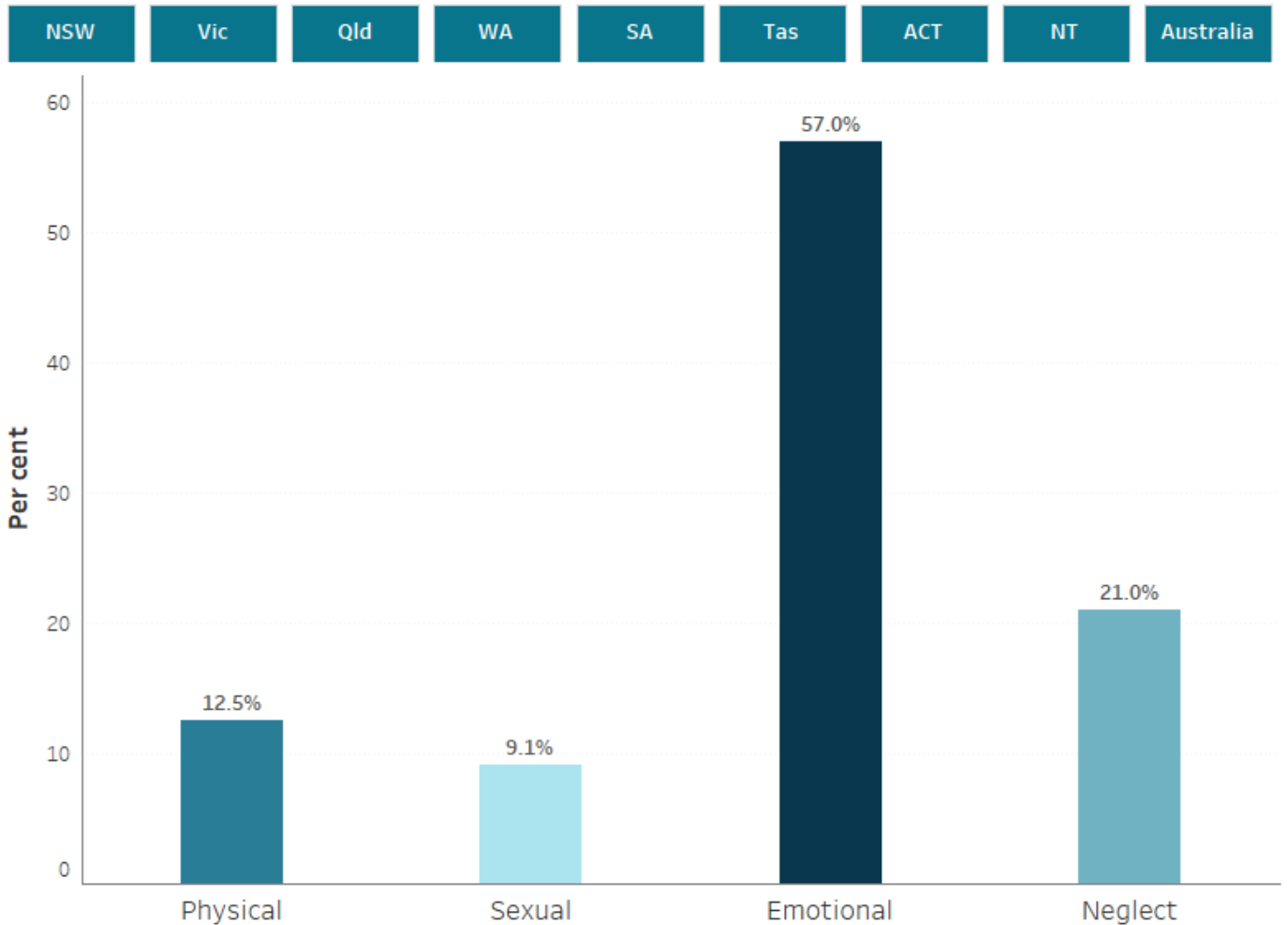
- about 83% (34,900) had only one substantiation
- about 50% (21,200) were girls and about 47% (19,900) were boys, with the remaining 3% (1,000) of children's sex being not stated
- emotional abuse was the most common type of maltreatment (57% or 24,000), followed by neglect (21% or 8,800)
- children living in very remote areas (20 per 1,000) were over 3 times more likely to be maltreated than children living in major cities (6.0 per 1,000)
- about one-third (34% or 14,300) were from the lowest socioeconomic areas
- of all age groups, infants aged under one had a higher proportion of substantiated maltreatment (14 per 1,000).

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables S3.4, S3.5, S3.7b, S3.8 and S3.13

Figure 1: Characteristics of children with substantiated maltreatment, by state or territory, 2023–24

Categories

- Abuse type (per cent)
- Age group (rate)
- Remoteness (rate)
- Sex (per cent)



Sources: CPA 2023–24: Insights, data tables 3.3, S3.5 and S3.7.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

Has the number of children in the system changed over time?

From 2019–20 to 2023–24, the rate of children who were:

- in the child protection system has remained stable around 31 per 1,000
- subjects of notifications increased from 49 per 1,000 to 53 per 1,000
- subjects of substantiations decreased from 8.7 per 1,000 to 7.3 per 1,000.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Insights, data table T1

While notifications increased, the rates for substantiations have decreased across these timeframes. This could be a result of:

- legislative changes, such as the expansion of the list of occupations that is mandated to report cases of suspected child maltreatment
- increased public awareness from inquiries into child protection processes.

Refer to the Appendices for more information on legislative changes and various inquiries into the child protection system.

Figure 2: Number of children in different components of child protection, 2019-20 to 2023-24

Categories

■ Child protection system ■ Subjects of notifications ■ Subjects of substantiations

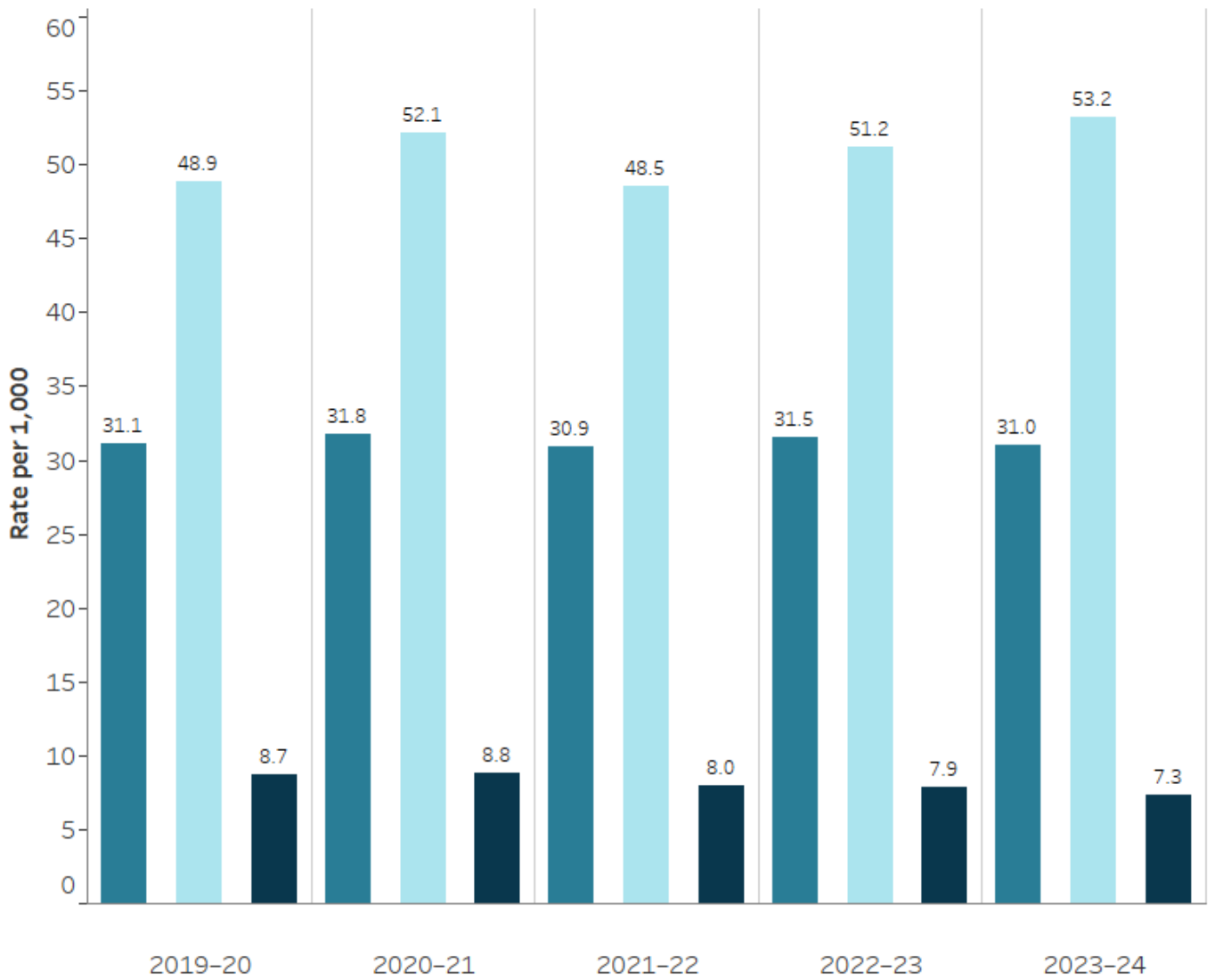


Chart: AIHW. Source: CPA 2023-24: Insights, Table T1.

References

HREOC (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) (1997), *Bringing them home: Report of the national Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, HREOC, accessed 24 February 2025.

Supporting children

In this section

- Introduction
- Intensive family support services
- Care and protection orders
- Out-of-home care
- What types of carers are there?
- How many children were new or repeat clients?
- How safe were children in care?
- How were children supported to transition out of care?

Introduction

Key findings

- In 2023–24, 33,300 children commenced intensive family support services.
- At 30 June 2024, 59,900 children were on care and protection orders.
- From 2019–20 to 2023–24, the number of children admitted to orders per year decreased from 13,100 to 10,100
- At 30 June 2024, 44,900 children were in out-of-home care.

Child protection departments provide and/or fund a range of services to support children in the child protection system to ensure they have stable, long-term care arrangements. These include:

- intensive family support services
- care and protection orders
- out-of-home care.

Intensive family support services

What is the role of intensive family support services?

Child protection departments may also work to strengthen families with referrals to intensive family support services at any time for advice, education, and support.

In 2023–24, 33,300 children commenced intensive family support services. Of these, most (87% or 29,100) were aged under 15.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table 8.1

These services aim to:

- support parents to care for their children
- prevent separation of children from parents
- achieve reunification where separation has already occurred.

More information on intensive family support services, including government expenditure, can be found in the [Report on Government Services 2025](#).

Care and protection orders

What is a care and protection order?

Care and protection orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare. Children can be placed on care and protection orders for various reasons, including:

- having been seriously harmed
- being at risk or significant risk of harm
- having no other care options.

The 3 main categories of legal responsibility conferred by care and protection orders include arrangements where:

- parents retain legal responsibility
- departments are given legal responsibility
- nominated carers are given legal responsibility.

A substantiated notification of maltreatment does not necessarily mean that a child will be placed on an order. In 2023–24, about one-fifth (20% or 9,600) of children who were subjects of substantiations were subsequently placed on an order within 12 months following substantiation.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S4.2

In cases where parents have made changes to ensure their children's safety and wellbeing at home, or are prepared to do so, the department may decide an order is unnecessary and consider other options, including:

- referring the family to support services
- putting a safety plan in place
- determining that no further action is needed.

Refer to the [Appendices](#) for more information on the different types of care and protection orders.

How many children were on care and protection orders?

At 30 June 2024, 59,900 children were on care and protection orders (10 per 1,000). Of these:

- 25,000 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (63 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children)
- 34,800 were non-Indigenous children (6.4 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children).

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S4.9

In 2023–24, around 10,100 children were admitted to care and protection orders. Of these:

- about three-quarters (76% or 7,700) were admitted for the first time
- almost three-quarters (72% or 7,300) were aged under 10 years.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables 4.2 and S4.3

More (11,200) children were discharged from care and protection orders. Of these, about one-fifth were continuously on an order:

- between one to 2 years (16% or 1,800)
- between 2 to 4 years (19% or 2,200)
- for 8 years or more (24% or 2,700).

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S4.4

Characteristics of children on care and protection orders

For children who were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2024:

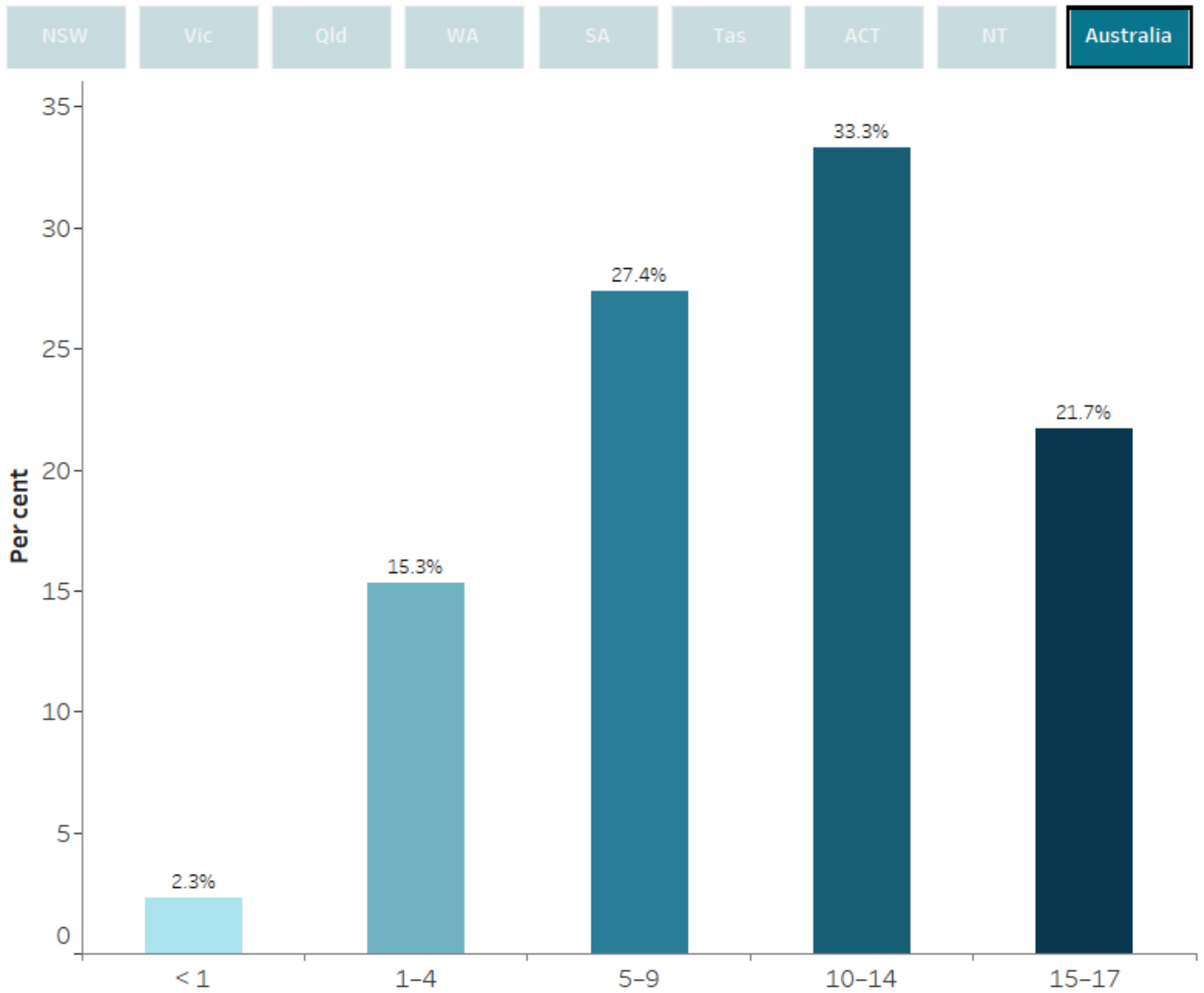
- almost half (45% or 27,200) were living with relatives/kin in home-based care
- one-third (33% or 20,000) were aged 10–14 years
- about 3 in 5 (63% or 37,700) were on finalised guardianship or custody orders.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables S4.5, S4.6 and S4.10

Figure 3: Characteristics of children on care and protection orders, by state or territory, 2023–24

Categories

- Age group (per cent)
- Sex (per cent)



Sources: CPA 2023–24: *Insights*, data tables S4.7 and S4.8.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

Has the number of children on care and protection orders changed over time?

Between 30 June 2020 and 30 June 2024, the rate of children on care and protection orders has decreased from 11 per 1,000 to 10 per 1,000.

From 2019–20 to 2023–24, the number of children:

- admitted to orders decreased from about 13,100 to about 10,100 children
- discharged from orders decreased slightly, from about 11,800 to about 11,200.

Sources: CPA 2023–24: *Insights*, data tables T1, S4.11 and S4.12

Figure 4: Children admitted to and discharged from care and protection orders, 2020-21 to 2023-24

Categories

■ Children admitted to orders

■ Children discharged from orders

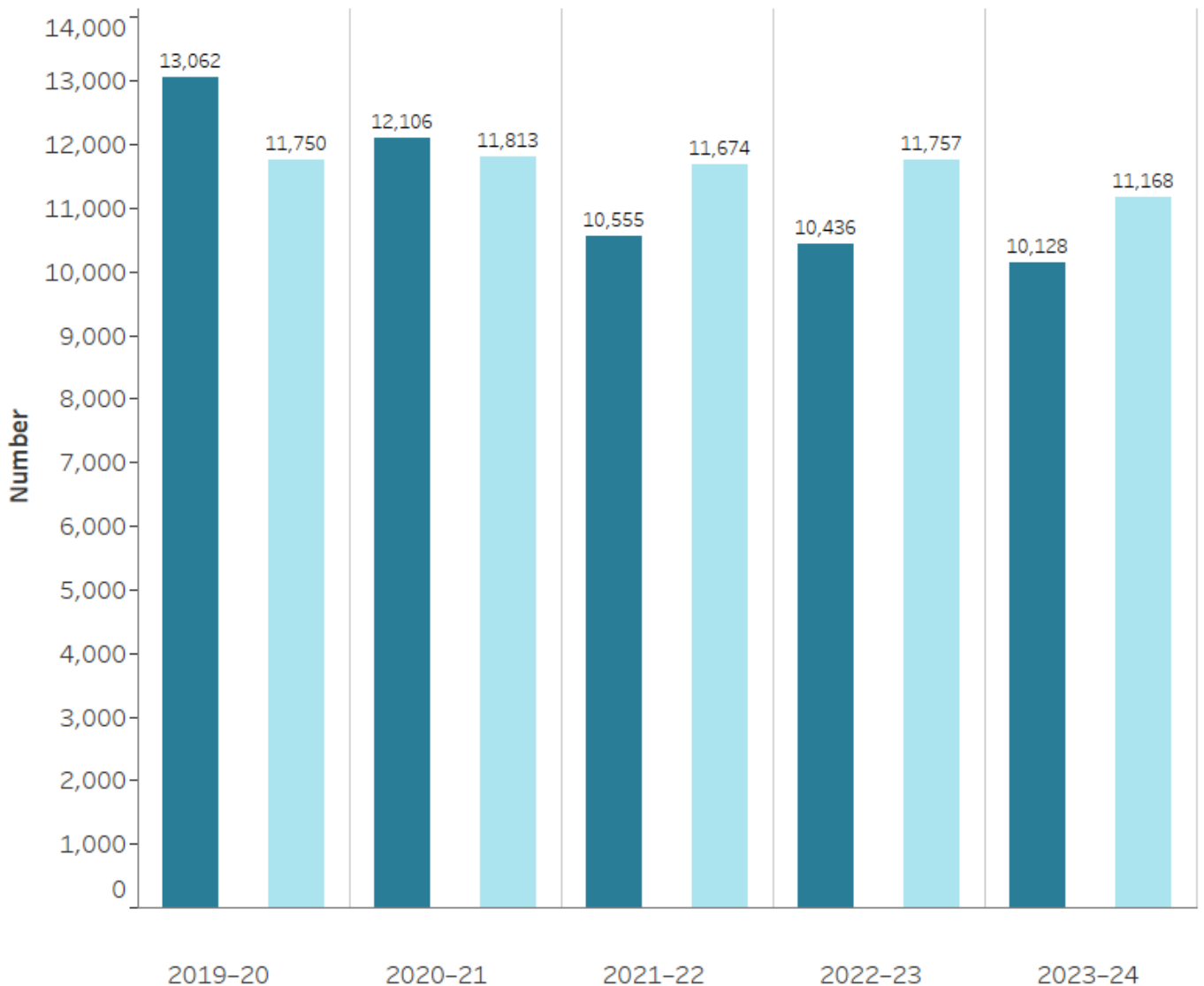


Chart: AIHW. Sources: CPA 2023-24: Insights, data tables S4.11 and S4.12.

Out-of-home care

What is out-of-home care?

Out-of-home care is overnight care for children aged under 18 who are unable to live with their families due to child safety concerns. This includes placements approved by the child protection department for which there is ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer). This nationally consistent definition for out-of-home care was implemented in 2018-19.

Out-of-home care includes:

- legal (court-ordered) placements
- voluntary placements
- placements made for the purpose of providing respite for parents and/or carers.

Children are placed in out-of-home care for many reasons, including:

- being the subjects of substantiations and needing a protective environment
- having parents who are incapable of providing adequate care
- needing alternative accommodation during times of conflict
- having parents or carers who need respite.

Consistent with the principle of keeping children with their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so, out-of-home care placements are considered to be a last resort.

The national definition for out-of-home care excludes children on third-party parental responsibility orders as the minister or executive no longer has guardianship of children on these orders. However, all states and territories continue to fund carers of children on third-party parental responsibility orders and some (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory) continue to provide some level of case management.

As at 30 June 2024 there were about 11,100 children on third-party parental responsibility orders. Children on third-party parental responsibility orders are considered to have achieved a more permanent arrangement.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table T3

Refer to the [Appendices](#) for more information on the different types of out-of-home care placements.

How many children were in out-of-home care?

As at 30 June 2024, 44,900 children were in out-of-home care (7.7 per 1,000). Of these:

- 20,000 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (50 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children)
- 24,800 were non-Indigenous children (4.6 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children).

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables 5.1 and S5.5

In 2023–24, the rate of children admitted to out-of-home care was 1.9 per 1,000, which was the same as the rate of children discharged from out-of-home care during this period. Nationally:

- 10,800 children were admitted to out-of-home care
- 11,000 children were discharged from out-of-home care.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables S5.1 and S5.2

Children in the youngest age group (under one) had the highest admission rate of 6.5 per 1,000 compared with 2.0 per 1,000 or less for other age groups.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S5.1

The discharge rate was highest for children in the oldest age group (15–17 years) at 4.4 per 1,000 compared with 1.5 per 1,000 or less for other age groups.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S5.2

Characteristics of children in out-of-home care

For children who were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2024:

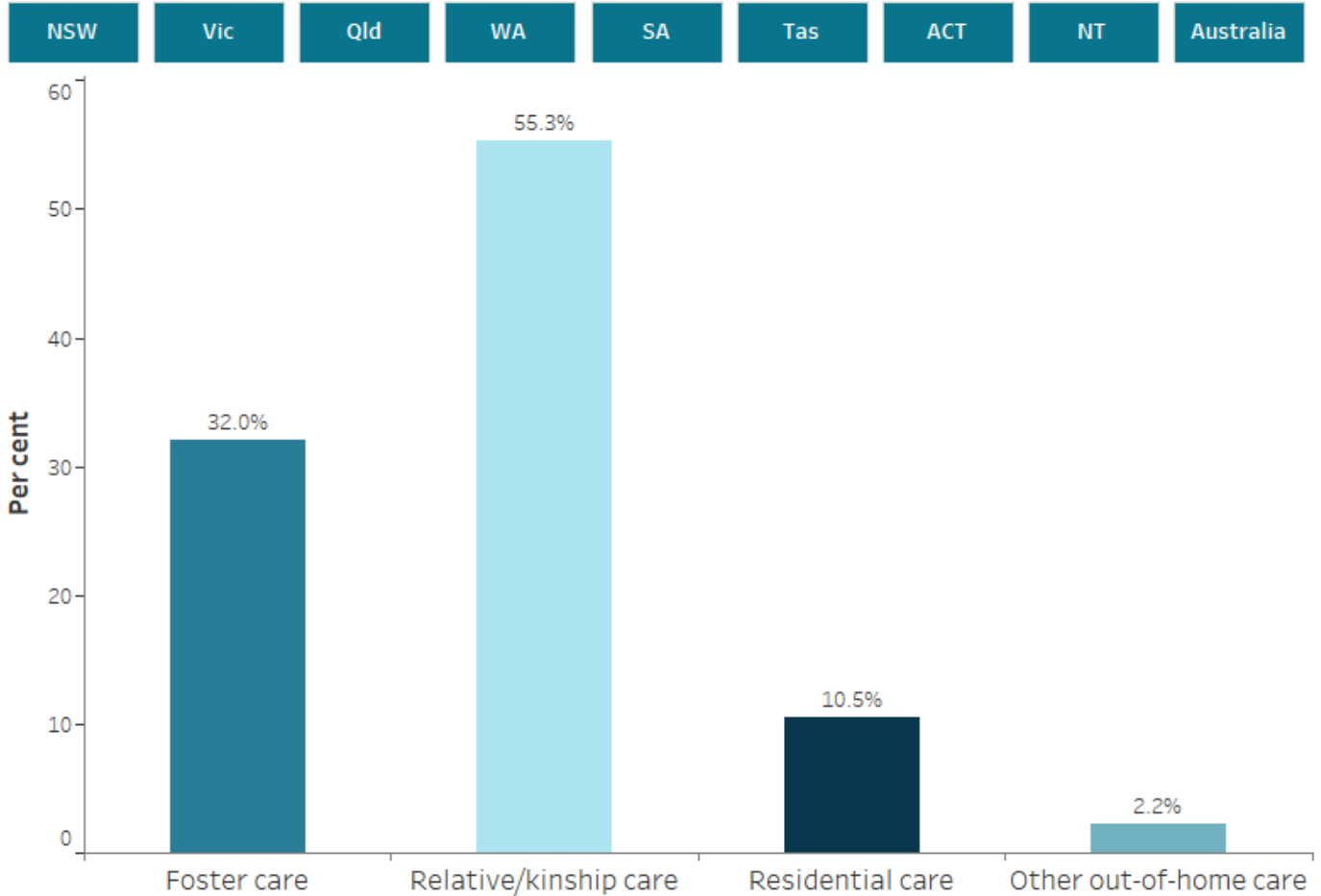
- about 88% (39,700) were in home-based care (foster care, relative/kinship care and other home-based care)
- about 3 in 5 (61% or 27,300) children were aged 5–14 years
- disability status was known for 72% (32,100) of children in care, and 22% (10,000) of all children in care had a disability
- the rate of children living in inner and outer regional (12 per 1,000) and remote and very remote (14 per 1,000) areas were more than twice that of those living in major cities (5.9 per 1,000)
- most (93% or 41,800) were on a care and protection order.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables S5.3, S5.5, S5.8, S5.9b and S5.13

Figure 5: Characteristics of children in out-of-home care, by state or territory, 2023–24

Categories

- Age group (rate)
- Placement type (per cent)
- Remoteness (rate)
- Sex (per cent)



Note: Some placement types are not published for all states and territories due to small numbers.

Sources: CPA 2023–24: Insights, data tables S5.3, S5.5, S5.6, and S5.9.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

Characteristics of children in long-term out-of-home care

In 2023–24, 69% (31,200) of children in out-of-home care had been in care for 2 years or more, known as long-term care. Of these:

- about 68% (21,100) were aged 5–14 years
- about 81% (25,300) were on a long-term guardianship arrangement.

Sources: CPA 2023–24: Insights, data tables S5.15 and S5.16

Has the number of children in out-of-home care changed over time?

Between 30 June 2020 and 30 June 2024, the number of children in out-of-home care decreased from 8.2 to 7.7 per 1,000.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Insights, data table T1

From 2019–20 to 2023–24, the number of children admitted and discharged from care changed somewhat each year, but the overall rates remained relatively stable at about 2.0 per 1,000.

Sources: CPA 2023–24: Insights, data tables S5.17 and S5.19

Figure 6: Children admitted to and discharged from out-of-home care, 2019-20 to 2023-24

Categories

- Children admitted to out-of-home care
- Children discharged from out-of-home care

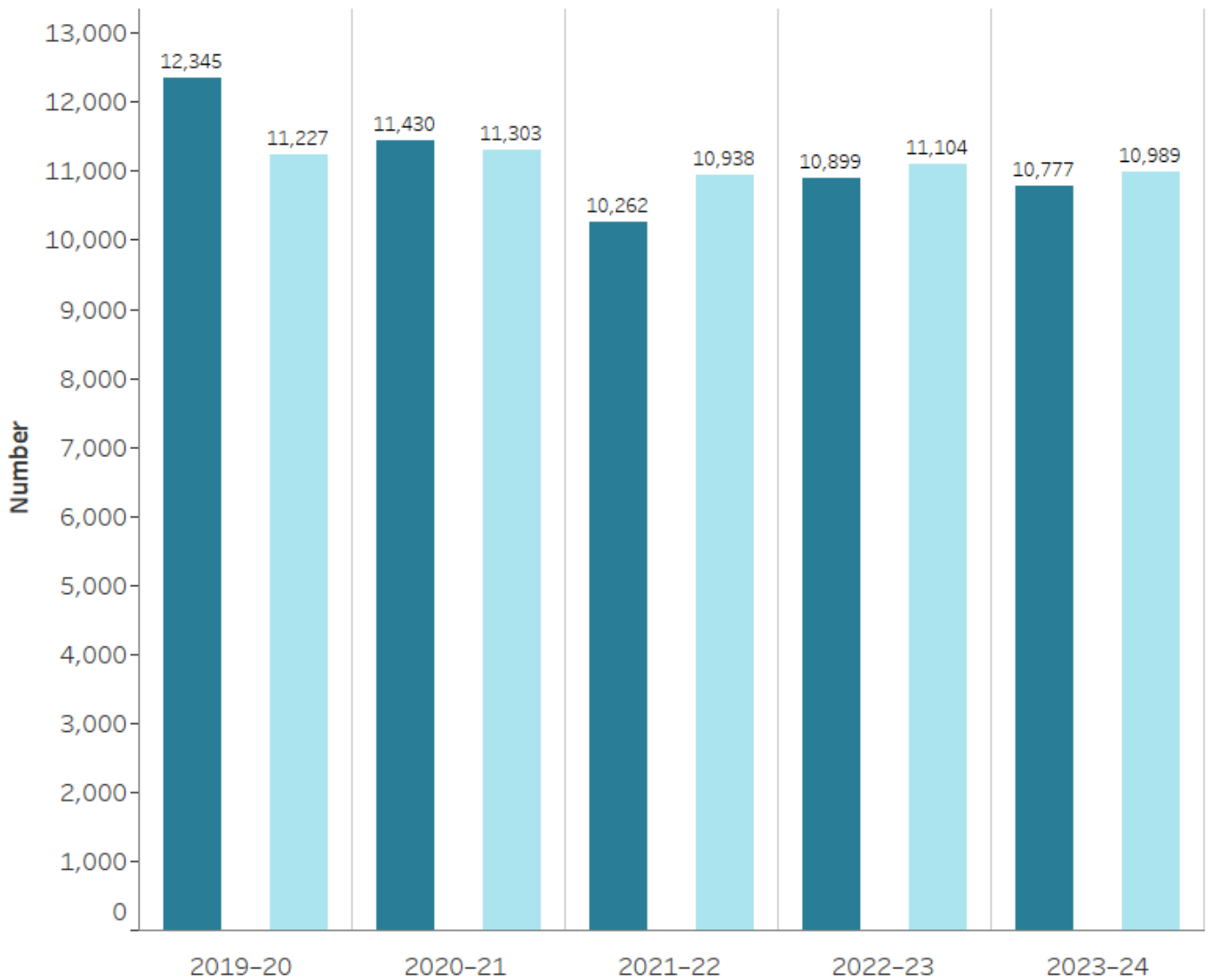


Chart: AIHW. Source: CPA 2023-24: Insights, data tables S5.18 and S5.19.

What types of carers are there?

Carers are people who have been assessed and approved by the relevant department or agency to provide care in their private households for children in funded and non-funded out-of-home care.

The main types of carers include:

- foster carers who are not related to the child
- relative/kinship carers who are related to or know the child
- long-term guardianship carers who may or may not be related to the child
- respite carers who provide short-term accommodation where the intention is for the child to return to their prior residence (out-of-home care or family home).

How many children were placed in unique carer households?

Reporting of the total number of unique carer households can give insight into the total number of children placed in the household, regardless of the placement type, as some carer households might be approved/authorised to provide more than one care type.

It also allows information about carer households that provide placements other than foster or relative/kinship care to be included in the count.

As at 30 June 2024 there were about 24,200 unique carer households with a placement. Of these:

- more than half (60% or 14,500) had one child placed with them
- about 38% (9,200) had 2-4 children placed with them

- 1.9% (465) had 5 or more children placed with them.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S7.1

How many children were placed with foster or relative/kinship carers?

As at 30 June 2024 there were about 8,000 foster carer households with a placement. Of these:

- just over half (53% or 4,200) had one child placed with them
- about 44% (3,500) had 2–4 children placed with them
- 3.1% (250) had 5 or more children placed with them.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S7.2

As at 30 June 2024 there were about 16,000 relative/kinship carer households with one or more children placed with them. Of these:

- almost two-thirds (65% or 10,400) had one child placed with them
- just over one-third (34% or 5,500) had 2–4 children placed with them
- 1.1% (175) had 5 or more children placed with them.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S7.3

The prevalence of households with multiple child placements might reflect that, in many jurisdictions, priority is given to placing siblings together.

How many children were new or repeat clients?

In 2023–24, 179,000 children aged under 18 years came into contact with the child protection system. Of these, the majority (72% or 129,000) of children were repeat (which also includes continuing) clients.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables 2.2 and S2.2

Repeat clients are children who have previously been and/or who have continuously remained in contact with the child protection system. These include children:

- who have been the subject of an investigation
- were discharged from any type of national care and protection order or funded out-of-home care placement (excluding respite placements lasting less than 7 days)
- whose earliest order and/or placement in the current reporting period is part of a preceding continuous episode of care.

Data on new and repeat clients provide some insight into the extent to which new clients, or those with prior involvement, come into contact with the child protection system, and whether this differs across the system components.

In 2023–24:

- More than half (58% or 70,200) of the 121,000 children who were subjects of investigations for alleged child maltreatment notifications were repeat clients.
- Most (97% or 67,700) of the 70,100 children on a care and protection order were repeat clients.
- Most (96% or 53,000) of the 55,300 children placed in out-of-home care were repeat clients.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S2.2

Refer to the [Appendices](#) for more information on the child protection system.

How safe were children in care?

Sometimes children in out-of-home care can be the subject of further abuse, for example, by their carer or another person in the household or care facility.

More information on the safety and abuse of children in care will be included in the report over the coming months.

How were children supported to transition out of care?

To support children to find stable long-term care arrangements, child protection departments undertake permanency planning for children in out-of-home care.

Permanency outcomes include:

- reunifying children with their families
- placing children in a third-party care arrangement
- placing children on long-term guardianship or custody orders
- adoption.

More information on children's transition from out-of-home care will be included in the report over the coming months.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

This update presents data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system (released 30 September 2025).

Key findings

85% of First Nations children who were reunified with their family in 2022–23 did not return to out-of-home care in 2023–24.

In 2023–24, 68% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who had siblings in out-of-home care were placed with at least one of their siblings.

In 2023–24, when entering out-of-home care, 47% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were placed with relatives or kin, an increase from 45% in 2019–20.

In 2023–24, 35% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children leaving out-of-home care were reunified with their family.

Introduction and policy landscape

Key findings

- 85% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were reunified with their family in 2022–23 did not return to out-of-home care in 2023–24.
- In 2023–24, when entering out-of-home care, 47% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were placed with relatives or kin, an increase from 45% in 2019–20.
- In 2023–24, 68% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who had siblings in out-of-home care were placed with at least one of their siblings.
- In 2023–24, 35% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children leaving out-of-home care were reunified with their family.

Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are safe from harm and are able to thrive by remaining connected to their family, community and culture is a key focus of governments and community leaders. In 2023–24, about 57,800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children came into contact with child protection systems.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S2.3

In December 2021, *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* (Safe and Supported) was released, with the Action Plans launched in January 2023 (DSS 2022). Safe and Supported was developed, and continues to be driven, by shared decision-making between the Commonwealth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, state and territory governments and collaboratively with the non-government sector. Safe and Supported's vision is for children in Australia to reach their full potential by growing up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect. Safe and Supported is an important strategy in making progress towards Target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap which aims to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% of the 2019 rate by 2031.

Through the advocacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), the Commonwealth and state and territory governments committed to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) in the previous National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 (AIFS 2022; DSS 2021; SNAICC 2017), and the ATSICPP continues to be of critical importance in Safe and Supported. The Placement Principle is centred on the five elements of *Prevention, Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection*. State and territory government agencies responsible for child protection services are continuing to work towards implementing all five elements of the ATSICPP in legislation, policy, practice, programs and accountability frameworks.

The scope and source of the data in this report may differ from those published by different organisations. Therefore, direct comparisons cannot be made between the data included in this report and data included in other reports.

References

AIFS (Australian Institute of Family Studies) (2022) [Australian child protection legislation](#), AIFS, accessed 23 May 2025.

DSS (Department of Social Services) (2021) [The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031 | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](#), DSS, accessed 19 August 2025.

DSS (2022) [Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026 | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](#), DSS, accessed 23 May 2025.

SNAICC National Voice for our Children (2017) [Understanding and applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: a resource for legislation, policy, and program development](#), SNAICC, accessed 23 May 2025.

Notifications, investigations and substantiations

Notifications are the entry point for children into the child protection system. A notification can be received from members of the public or mandated reporters. A child protection notification triggers an intake process where child protection workers assess the notification and determine what action to take. If the notification meets a threshold for further action an investigation is commenced. At the conclusion of the investigation, the case manager will make a substantiation decision. An assessment of substantiation is made when a threshold of harm or potential harm is met.

Due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report on notifications, investigations and substantiations, data are not comparable between jurisdictions. Refer to [Appendices](#) for more information on differences in jurisdictions' policy and practice.

Refer to [The process of determining child maltreatment section of Child protection Australia \(CPA\) 2023–24: Insights](#) for more information on notifications, investigations and substantiations.

How many notification assessment decisions were made?

When a notification is received, the relevant department or agency will begin a process to determine the level of assistance it should provide for the child who was the subject of the notification. In keeping with the prevention element of the ATSI CPP, departments respect the rights of children to be brought up in their families, ensuring that families have equitable access to quality support services. This includes having alternative intake and referral pathways to early intervention prior to families being investigated by the child protection system.

Refer to [Appendices](#) for more information on how notification assessment decisions are made across jurisdictions.

The prevention element of the ATSI CPP relates to supporting families and building the capacity in communities to care safely for their children. This will protect future generations from the devastating effects of removal from family, community, culture and country (SNAICC 2017).

In 2023–24, child protection departments made an assessment decision for around 139,000 notifications of alleged child maltreatment involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (Figure 1). Of these notifications, around 47% (65,200) were assessed as requiring an investigation. The remaining 53% (73,400) of notifications with an assessment decision were resolved without an investigation*:

- 14% (19,800) did not require further action as the subject child was assessed as not being at risk of harm.
- 4.7% (6,500) required other involvement, such as cases where the family needs were still being assessed and a case plan was being developed.
- 6.5% (9,100) were provided with advice or referred to another agency.

Source: CPA 2023–24: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.1

* Note the remaining 38,100 notifications are from New South Wales and Tasmania, where notifications cannot be differentiated by some or all assessment decisions.

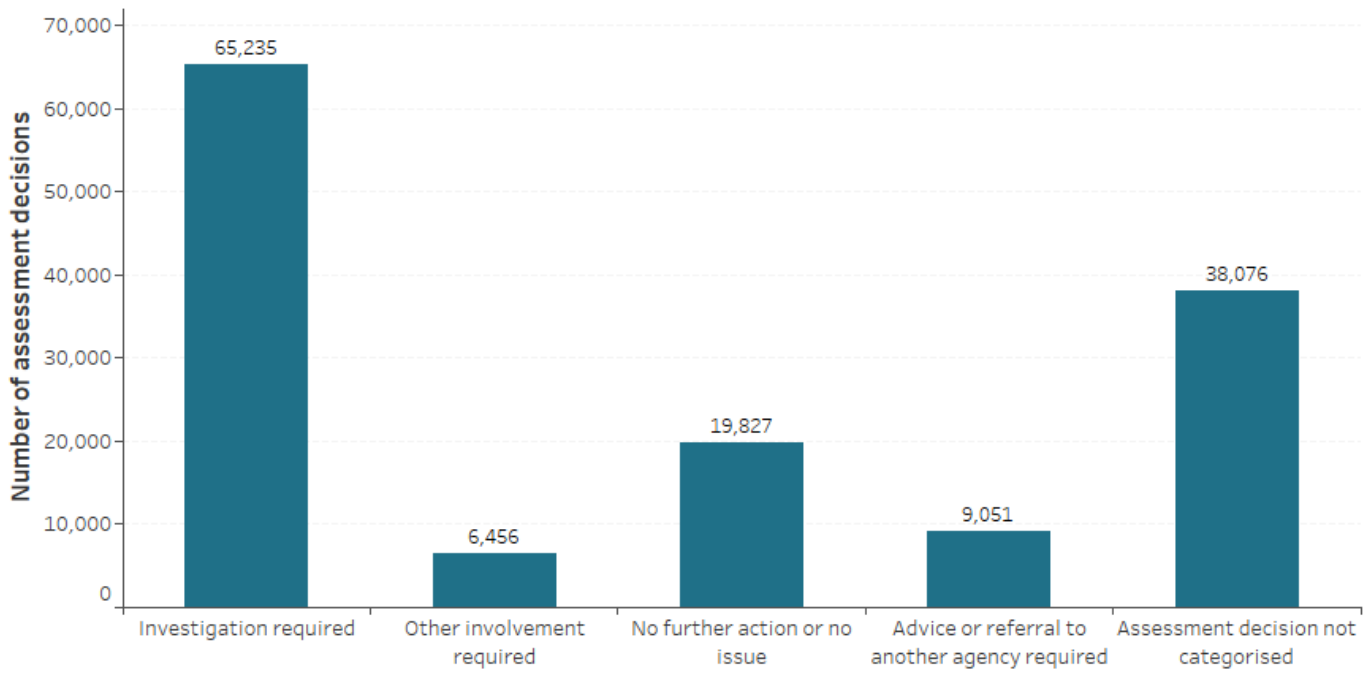
Figure 1: Notifications made about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for which an assessment decision has been made, by notification assessment decision

Select data type:

- Number
- Per cent

NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
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Notifications made about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia for which an assessment decision has been made, by notification assessment decision



Notes:

1. The population in this visualisation is different from supplementary table S3.1 in Child protection Australia 2023–24: Insights.
2. Data in this visualisation are not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in the way jurisdictions collect and report on notifications.
3. Percentages in this visualisation may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.1.

Assessment of substantiated maltreatment

In 2023–24, around 12,900 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were the subject of an assessment of substantiated maltreatment.

Sources: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.2

Types of substantiated maltreatment

Emotional abuse: Any act by a person having the care of a child that results in the child suffering any kind of significant emotional deprivation or trauma. Children affected by exposure to family violence are also included in this category.

Neglect: Any serious acts or omissions by a person having the care of a child that, within the bounds of cultural tradition, constitute a failure to provide conditions that are essential for the healthy physical and emotional development of a child.

Physical abuse: Any non-accidental physical act inflicted upon a child by a person having the care of a child.

Sexual abuse: Any act by a person, having the care of a child that exposes the child to, or involves the child in, sexual processes beyond the child’s understanding or contrary to accepted community standards.

Children in care can experience further maltreatment, for example, by their carer or another person in the household or care facility. For more information see [CPA 2022–23: Safety of children in care](#).

For substantiated assessments of maltreatment, the ‘primary’ type of maltreatment is considered the most severe or most likely to place the child at risk of harm in the short term. The ‘primary’ type of maltreatment is assessed by the case manager. If more than one type of maltreatment has occurred, those not classified as the ‘primary’ type are classified as ‘other’ type. A child may have multiple or no ‘other’ types of maltreatment.

Most common primary and other types of maltreatment

In 2023–24, emotional abuse was the most common type of primary abuse (52% or 6,600) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were the subject of a substantiation assessment. Of the children who primarily experienced emotional abuse, the other types were:

- 24% (1,600) neglect

- 19% (1,300) physical abuse
- 1.9% (130) sexual abuse.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.2

Emotional abuse was also the most common other type of abuse for all other primary types of maltreatment.

- For children with a primary substantiation of physical abuse, 53% (790) also had emotional abuse as other type of maltreatment.
- For children with a primary substantiation of neglect, 38% (1,400) also had emotional abuse as other type of maltreatment.
- For children with a primary substantiation of sexual abuse, 24% (240) also had emotional abuse as other type of maltreatment.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.2

Least common primary and other types of maltreatment

Sexual abuse was the least common primary type of abuse (7.6% or 980), and the least common other type of abuse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.*

- For children with physical abuse substantiations, 3.8% (56) had sexual abuse as other type of maltreatment.
- For children with neglect substantiations, 2.7% (100) had sexual abuse as other type of maltreatment.
- For children with emotional abuse substantiations, 1.9% (130) had sexual abuse as other type of maltreatment.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.2

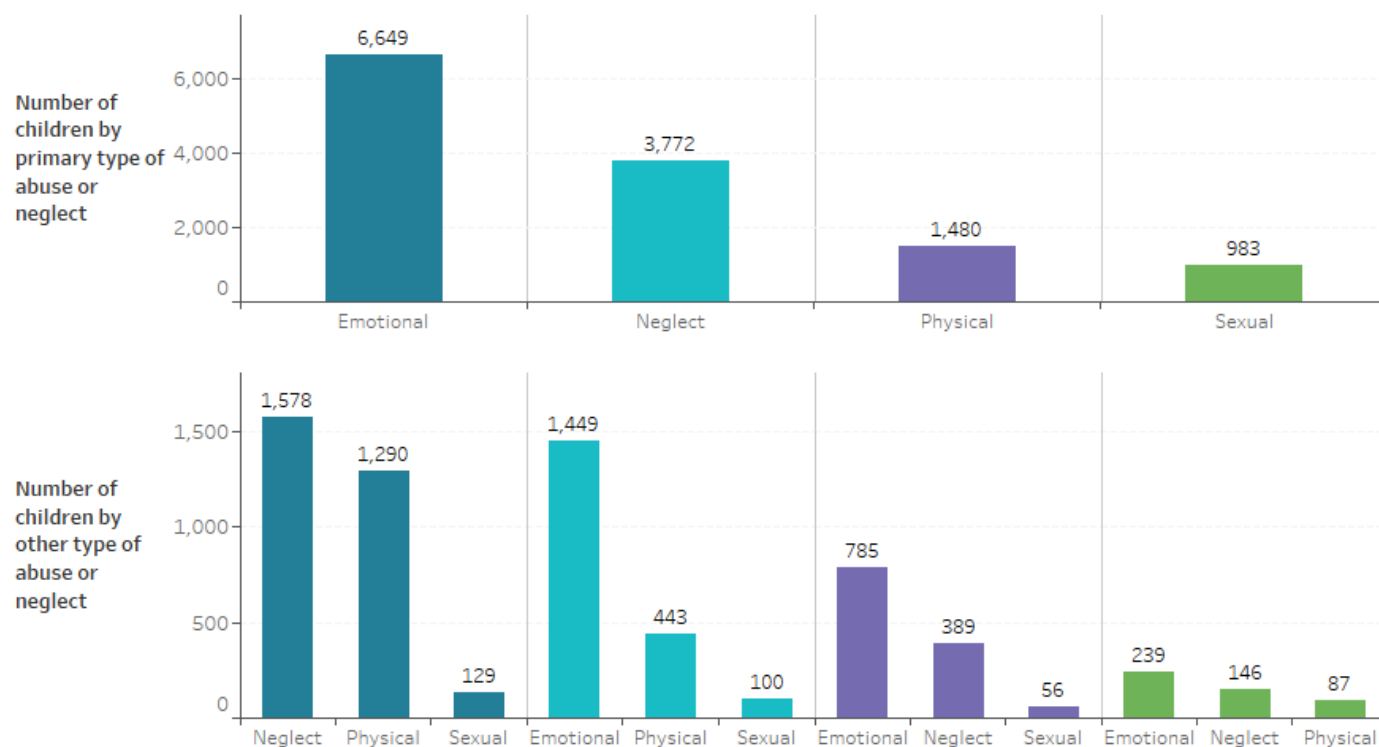
*Statistics of child sexual abuse may be an underestimate due to the challenges faced by children and young people when disclosing sexual abuse (Alaggia et al. 2019; Esposito 2014). For further information, please see [Child sexual abuse – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#).

Figure 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with a substantiated maltreatment assessment in 2023–24, by primary type of abuse or neglect and other types of abuse or neglect

Select data type:

- Number
- Per cent

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with a substantiated maltreatment assessment in 2023–24, by primary type of abuse or neglect (above) and other types of abuse or neglect (below)



Notes:


1. Since children can have multiple other types of abuse or no other types of abuse, the summation of this will not equal to the number of children with this primary type of abuse.
2. Primary type of abuse or neglect per cents are calculated as a per cent of the total i.e. children with a notification in the reporting period and an accompanying substantiation.
3. Other types of abuse or neglect per cents are calculated as a per cent of children with this primary type of abuse or neglect.
4. Percentages in the visualisation may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.2.

References

SNAICC National Voice for our Children (2017) [Understanding and applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: a resource for legislation, policy, and program development](#), SNAICC, accessed 23 May 2025.

Alaggia R, Collin-Vézina D and Lateef R (2019) [Facilitators and barriers to child sexual abuse \(CSA\) disclosures: a research update \(2000–2016\)](#), *Trauma, violence, & abuse*, 20(2):260–283, doi:10.1177/1524838017697312.

Esposito C (2014)  [Child sexual abuse and disclosure – What does the research tell us?](#), Family & community services, NSW Government, accessed 4 July 2025.

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Care and protection orders

Care and protection orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments varying levels of responsibility for a child's welfare. Children can be placed on care and protection orders for various reasons, including:

- having been seriously harmed
- being at risk or significant risk of harm
- having no other care options.

The 3 main categories of legal responsibility conferred by care and protection orders include arrangements where:

- parents retain legal responsibility
- departments are given legal responsibility
- nominated carers are given legal responsibility.

Refer to the [Care and protection orders section of CPA 2023–24: Insights](#) and [Appendices](#) for more information.

How many children were on care and protection orders?

Across Australia, as of 30 June 2024, around 25,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were subject to a care and protection order. The highest number of children on care and protection orders were children aged 10–14 (33% or 8,200 children) followed by children aged 5–9 years (28% or 7,100 children).

Source: *CPA 2023–2024: Insights*, data table S4.7

In 2022–23*, 23% (3,600) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were the subject of a substantiation assessment were placed on a care and protection order within 12 months of the substantiation.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S4.2

*These data are from the 2023–24 data collection. The collection covers a two-year period that allows reporting for events beginning in 2022–23 with a 12-month follow-up period.

Over the 2023–24 reporting period, around 4,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were discharged from their care and protection orders. Of these:

- 27% (1,100 children) had been continuously subject to an order for 8 years or more.
- 20% (820 children) were continuously subject to an order for 2 to 4 years.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S4.4

The most common care and protection orders made with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at 30 June 2024 were finalised guardianship orders (70% or 17,500 children). Under finalised guardianship orders, the day-to-day responsibility of the child is given to a carer nominated by the relevant child protection department.

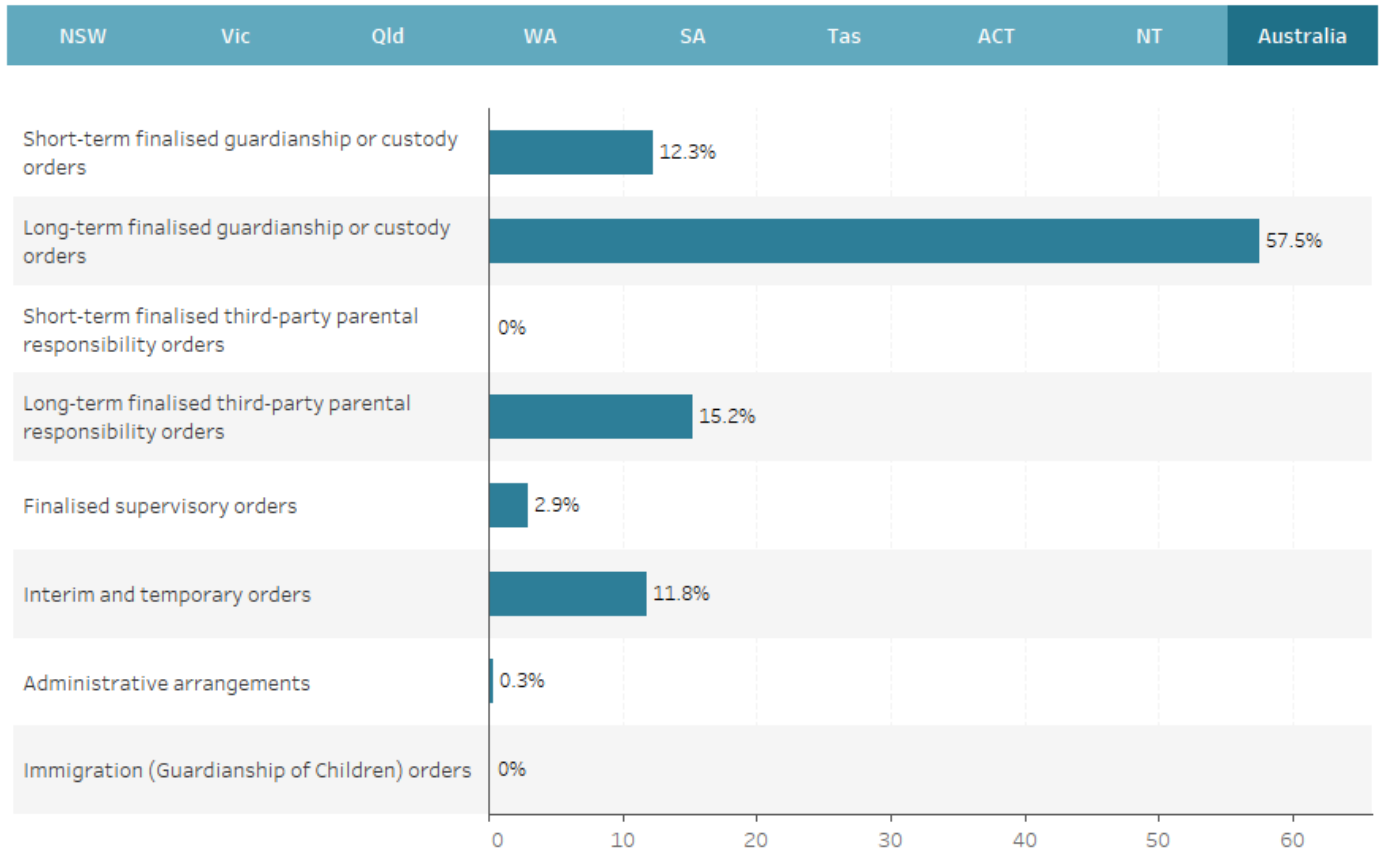
The second most common care and protection order made with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were third-party parental responsibility orders (15% or 3,800 children). In these orders, both the day-to-day responsibility and legal responsibility of the child is given to nominated carers approved by the Court (Figure 3).

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S4.10

Figure 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, by type of care and protection order

Select data type:

- Number
- Per cent



Note:

1. Percentages in this visualisation may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Insights, supplementary data table S4.10.

Has the number of children on care and protection orders changed over time?

Between 2020 and 2024, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders increased from 61 per 1,000 to 63 per 1,000. In 2024, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on a care and protection order was 9.8 times the rate of non-Indigenous children, an increase from 8.5 times the rate in 2020.*

Source: CPA 2023-24: Insights, data table T2

*These data use the Australian Bureau of Statistics' June 2024 update of estimated resident population data based on the 2021 ABS Census of Population and Housing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care

The ATSI CPP states that the decision to place a child in out-of-home care can only be made after all Active Efforts to keep a child safely at home have been exhausted (SNAICC 2019).

The national definition of out-of-home care includes overnight care for children aged under 18 who are unable to live with their families due to child safety concerns, and where the carer receives a financial payment. However, all states and territories continue to fund carers of children on third-party parental responsibility orders and some (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory) continue to provide some level of case management. The national definition of out-of-home care generally excludes children on third-party responsibility orders as the Minister or executive no longer has guardianship of children on these orders. Refer to the [Out-of-home care section of CPA 2023–24: Insights and Appendices](#) for more information on out-of-home care and third-party parental responsibility orders.

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in out-of-home care?

At 30 June 2024, around 20,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in out-of-home care.

Of these children:

- 45% (8,900) were living in major cities.
- Those under one year had the lowest rate of 21 per 1,000 children in out-of-home care. Children aged 10–14 years had the highest rate of 58 per 1,000, followed by children aged 5–9 with a rate of 57 per 1,000.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables S5.5 and S5.9

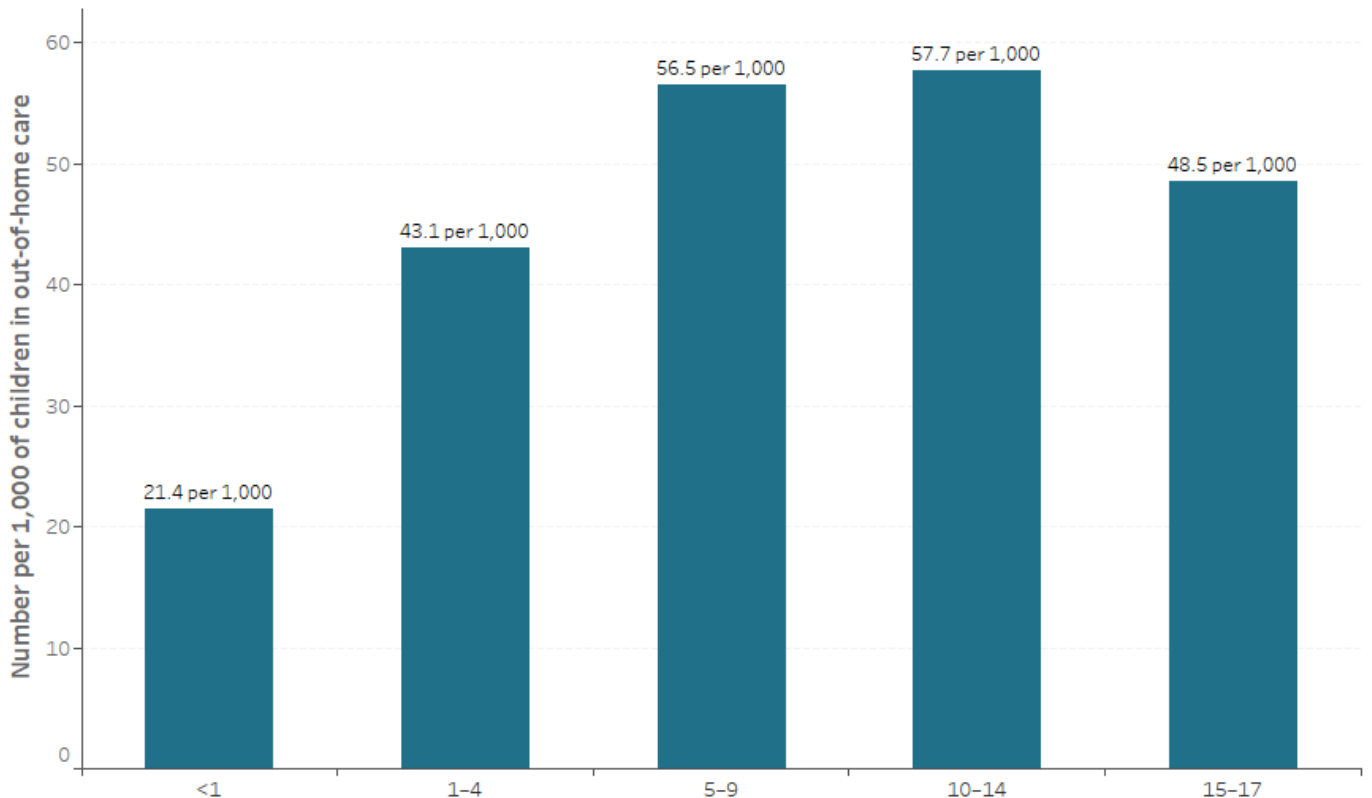
Figure 4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, by age group

Select data type:

- Number
 Number per 1,000

NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in Australia, by age group



Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, supplementary data table S5.5.

Around 4,400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were admitted to out-of-home care in 2023–24. The admission rate was highest for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under 1 year of age, at 33 per 1,000 children, compared with 12 per 1,000 or less for other age groups.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S5.1

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in long-term out-of-home care

At 30 June 2024, almost three quarters (71% or 14,100) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care had been continuously in care for 2 years or more; this is known as long-term care. Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in long-term care:

- 10–14 year-olds had the highest rate at 47 per 1,000 (5,200), followed by 5–9 years at 44 per 1,000 (4,700).
- 41% (5,800) were on a long-term guardianship order in a relative/kinship care arrangement, followed by 32% (4,600) who were on a long-term guardianship order in a foster care arrangement.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data tables S5.14, S5.15 and S5.16

Placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care

Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are placed in out-of-home care, the ATSI CPP identifies a placement hierarchy that seeks to maintain as high a level of connection as possible to family and culture (SNAICC 2017). For the highest level of connection to family and culture children should be placed with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin, or non-Indigenous relatives. Of the 20,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care:

- Around 10,900 (55%) were placed with their relatives or kin.
 - Of these, most children were placed with a grandparent, aunt, uncle or sibling as their carer (6,300 or 58%).
- Around 1,700 (8.6%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were placed with a non-relative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregiver.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data tables 10.4 and 10.7

Placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on third-party orders

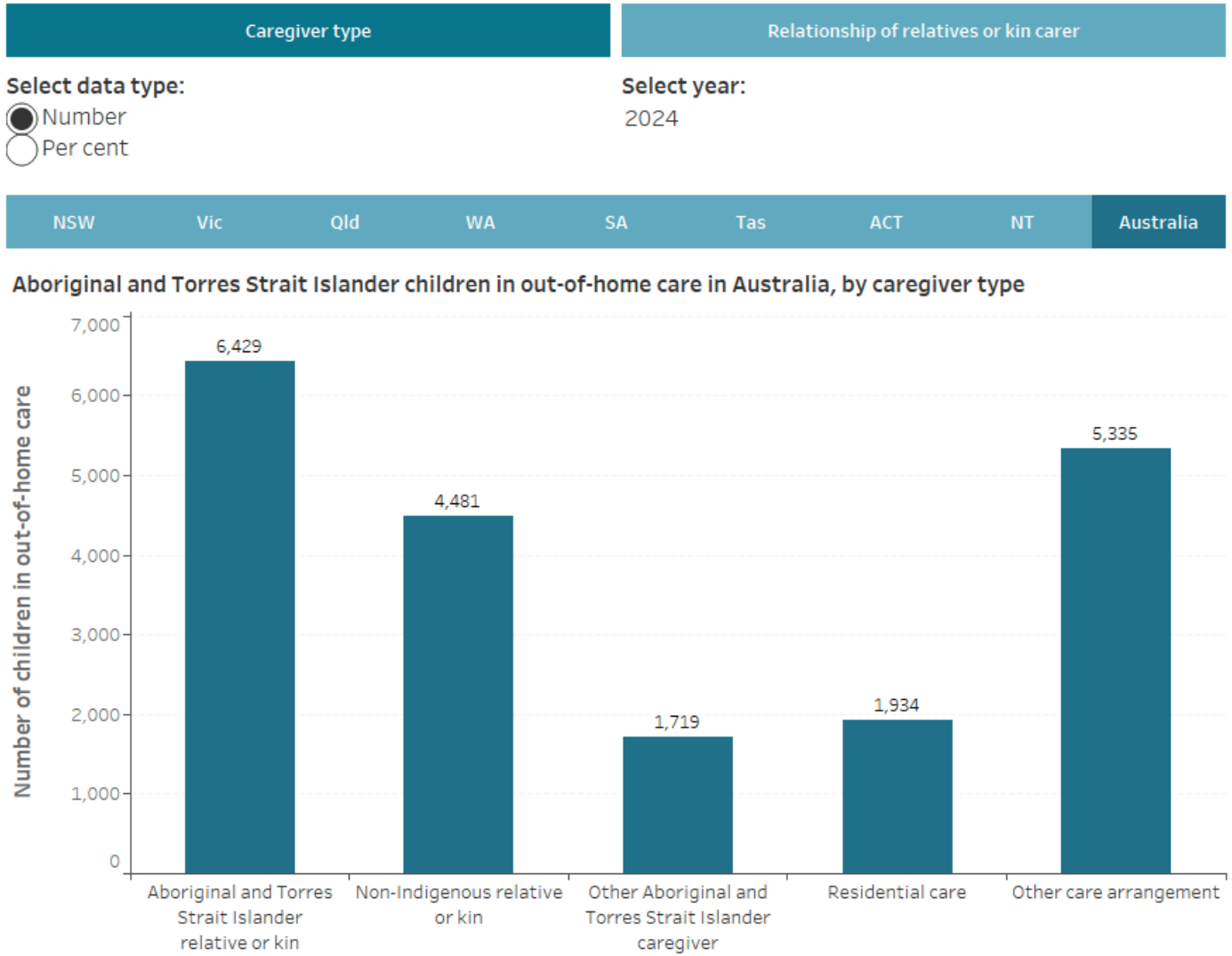
The [national definition for out-of-home care](#) excludes children on third-party parental responsibility orders, as the Minister or executive no longer has guardianship of children on these orders. However, as these children are not residing at home, it is important to consider their placements through the lens of the ATSI CPP (SNAICC 2023). Of the 3,800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on third-party orders at 30 June 2024:

- 45% (1,700) were living with non-Indigenous relatives or kin.
- Around one-quarter (26% or 990) were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.3

More detailed information on the placement hierarchy can be found in [*The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A guide to support implementation*](#).

Figure 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, by caregiver type



Notes:

1. Percentages in this visualisation may not add to 100 due to rounding or the inclusion of not stated/unknowns in the total.
2. Other care arrangement: includes children living with non-Indigenous caregivers that are not relatives/kin, in family group homes, living independently or with any other type of caregiver.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.4.

The ATSI CPP also highlights the importance of children being placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives and kin as soon as possible if they are placed in out-of-home care (SNAICC 2017). Of the 4,400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children admitted to out-of-home care in 2023-24, 25% (1,100) were placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin in their first out-of-home care placement.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.6

Reconnection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives and kin through placement change

Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children cannot initially be placed with their relatives or kin, the ATSI CPP emphasises the importance of reconnecting children with family, community, culture and country through a change in placement where it is in the best interest of the child (SNAICC 2017).

In 2023-24, 5,400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experienced more than one placement in an out-of-home care episode. Of these:

- Around 1,300 (23%) children were either reconnected with or stayed connected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin through their last placement change in 2023-24.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.9

Examples of reconnected or stayed connected

Reconnected or stayed connected includes children who through their last placement change:

- Were reconnected. For example, a child is placed with a non-Indigenous foster carer and has a placement change to reside with their aunt.

- Stayed connected. For example, a child is placed with their uncle and has a placement change to reside with their grandfather.
- Were reconnected or stayed connected. For example, a child has an unknown placement type and has a placement change to reside with their grandmother; because their second-last placement is unknown it can not be determined if the child was reconnected or if they stayed connected through their last placement change.

For more information on reconnection categories, please see [Child Protection Australia 2023–24: Technical notes](#).

In 2023–24, around 4,900 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had more than one placement in an out-of-home care episode and it was possible to determine whether they were reconnected through a placement change (this excludes children who stayed connected and children with an unknown placement type that may have been either reconnected or stayed connected). Of these:

- About 700 (15%) children were reconnected with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin through their last placement change in 2023–24.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.9

It is important for the wellbeing of children and young people in out-of-home care to have stability after a placement change. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, this includes connection to family, community, culture and country (SNAICC 2017).

Around 600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 years were reconnected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin through a placement change in 2022–23* and remained in out-of-home care for at least 12 months. Of these:

- 505 (84%) remained with the same Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin for at least 12 months
- 530 (88%) remained with any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin for at least 12 months.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.10

*These data are from the 2023–24 data collection. The collection covers a two-year period that allows reporting for events beginning in 2022–23 with a 12-month follow-up period.

Timely and appropriate reconnection

The ATSI CPP emphasises the importance of moving children from placements lower in the placement hierarchy to a placement with greater connection to their culture and family, where it is safe and in a timely manner (SNAICC 2017).

Of the 2,100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 years whose first placement was not with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin and who remained in out-of-home care for at least 12 months, 390 (19%) were reconnected with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin within 12 months.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.11

Placement with siblings in out-of-home care

As well as having carers who are relatives or kin, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should be placed with their siblings where possible to keep strong relationships and support connection to family (SNAICC 2017). Factors such as safety and carer availability may impact the ability for child protection agencies to place children with their siblings. In 2023–24, of the 14,900 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who had at least one known sibling in out-of-home care, 10,100 (68%) were placed with at least one of their siblings.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.8

Maintaining and supporting connections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care

The connection element of the ATSI CPP relates to support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care to maintain or re-establish connections to their family, community, culture and country (SNAICC 2017).

Cultural plans include details such as a child's cultural background and actions taken to maintain their connection to culture (SNAICC 2019). At 30 June 2024, of the 17,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were required to have a cultural support plan, 82% (14,400) had a current cultural support plan. Since 2017 there has been an increase of around 5,800 children with a current cultural support plan. It should be noted that the data do not provide information on the quality of the cultural support plan, or whether it was implemented.

Source: *CPA 2022–23: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.5

Has the number of children in out-of-home care changed over time?

Between 2020 and 2024, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care increased from around 18,900 to around 20,000 children. In 2024, rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were 11 times higher than non-Indigenous children, an increase from 9.6 times higher in 2020.*

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table T2

*These data use the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) June 2024 update of estimated resident population data based on the 2021 ABS Census of Population and Housing. For more information on changes to populations resulting from the 2021 ABS Census, please see [Child Protection Australia 2023–24: Technical notes](#).

From 2019–20 to 2023–24, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering out-of-home care each year fluctuated from between 4,000 to around 4,600 children.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S5.17

References

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2017) *Understanding and applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: a resource for legislation, policy, and program development*, SNAICC, accessed 26 May 2025.

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2019) *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A guide to support implementation*, SNAICC, accessed 26 May 2025.

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2023) *Family Matters Report 2023*, SNAICC, accessed 26 May 2025.

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Pathways from out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

There are multiple paths a child in out-of-home care (as per the [national definition of out-of-home care](#)) can move through when transitioning from out-of-home care. These pathways from out-of-home care include children who are being:

- reunified with their families
- placed in a third-party care arrangement
- adopted from care
- aged out of care once they turn 18 years old
- transitioned to other placements that are out-of-scope for out-of-home care (for example, a non-funded placement where they live independently).

Refer to the [Glossary](#) for more information on the different pathways from out-of-home care.

States and territories have committed to the safe reunification of children with families as part of the broader commitment to implement the ATSI CPP to the standard of Active Efforts* (DSS 2022; AIHW 2022).

* Active efforts are purposeful, thorough and timely efforts that are supported by legislation and policy and enable the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (SNAICC 2019).

Reunification is covered by the connection element of the ATSI CPP. Reunifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with their families can mean re-establishing the closest possible connection to their family, community and culture (SNAICC 2017). Children are considered to be eligible for reunification if they are in out-of-home care.

Considerations for pathways from out-of-home care

Different jurisdictional policies and practice can affect the comparability of pathways data, including:

- There is no nationally agreed definition for reunifications. As such, reporting of permanency events relating to reunification is based on local definitions of reunification.
- Third-party parental responsibility orders vary across jurisdictions with the biggest difference relating to the provision of ongoing case management in some cases.

Refer to the [Appendices](#) for more information on differences in jurisdictions' policy and practice.

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were discharged from out-of-home care?

In 2023–24, about 4,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were discharged from out-of-home care. Of these children:

- 30% (1,300) were in out-of-home care for less than 6 months
- 28% (1,200) were in out-of-home care for 5 years or more.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.12

The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children discharged from out-of-home care increases with age. The discharge rate ranges from 6.8 per 1,000 for those aged under one year, to 9.5 per 1,000 for children aged 10–14 years, to around 25 per 1,000 for those aged 15–17 years. The rate for children aged 15–17 years includes children who were discharged due to aging out.

Young people who are leaving out-of-home care may access supports from state and territory governments. All states and territories offer support to young people leaving care up to at least 21 years of age. Support provided may include financial guidance, housing, education and job opportunities, legal advice, health and community services, and emotional support (Campo & Commerford 2016).

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Insights*, data table S5.2

Types of pathways from out-of-home care

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children discharged from out-of-home care in 2023–24:

- 35% (1,500) were reunified
- 7.0% (300) were placed on third-party orders
- 5 children were adopted
- 20% (860) aged out
- 38% (1,600) of children discharged from out-of-home care did not fall into the above categories. This may include (but is not limited to) children who transition to live independently in a non-funded placement or are in detention (Figure 6).

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.13

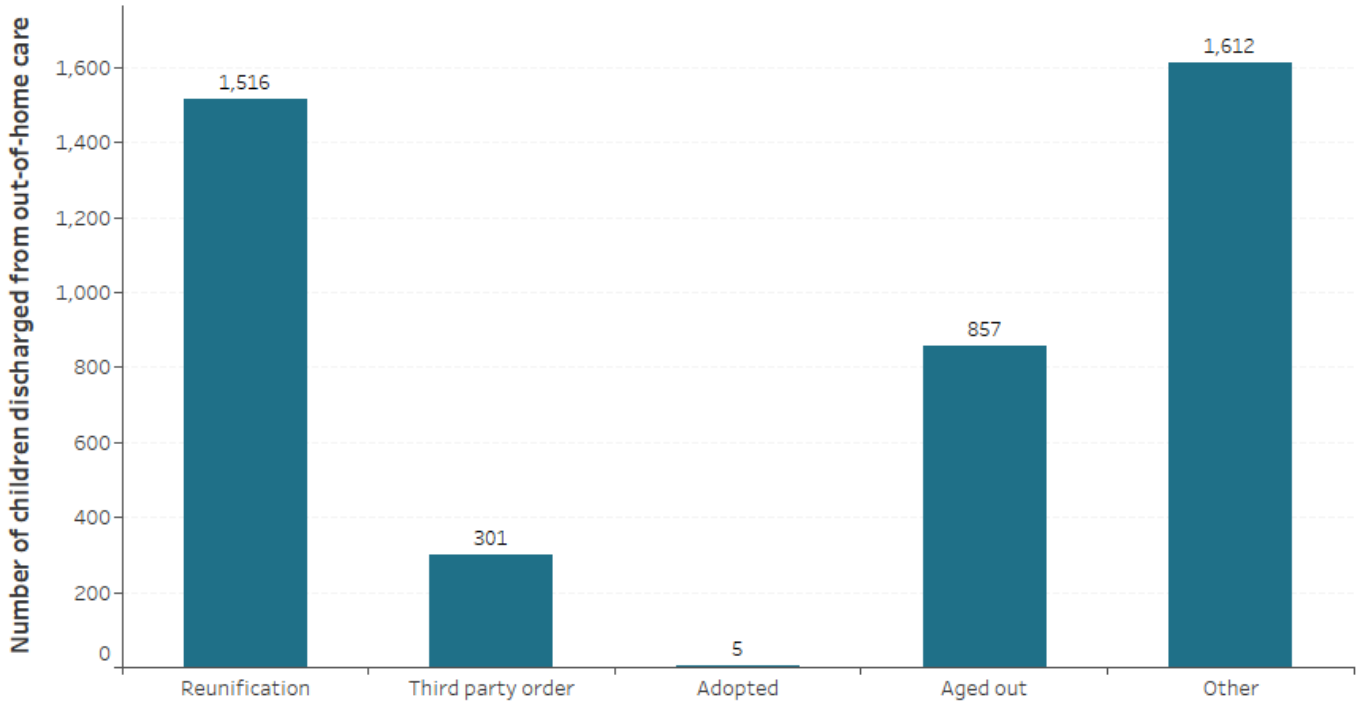
Figure 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were discharged from out-of-home care, by exit pathway

Select data type:

- Number
- Per cent

NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
-----	-----	-----	----	----	-----	-----	----	-----------

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia who were discharged from out-of-home care, by exit pathway



Notes:

1. Children discharged on their 18th birthday are included in this visualisation.
2. Percentages in this visualisation may not add to 100 due to rounding.
3. Aged out: denotes children who do not fall into the reunification, third-party order, and adopted categories, and their 18th birthday is within a week of the out-of-home care discharge date.
4. The other category denotes children who do not fall into the reunification, third-party order, adopted and aged-out categories. For the national total this includes 966 children who are discharged from out-of-home care and exit to a placement that is not in scope for out-of-home care (e.g. a non-funded placement where they live independently, with parents on a trial reunification, in detention etc). The remaining 2081 children included in the other category had an unknown exit pathway.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.13.

The ATSI CPP states that reunification of children must be considered early, and plans and culturally safe supports must be put in place to support reunification where it is identified as possible (SNAICC 2017). Of the 1,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were reunified in 2023–24:

- 95% (1,400) were reunified with birth parents.
- 39% (590) were reunified within 6 months.
- Younger children in out-of-home care had a higher proportion of reunifications. 17% (110) of children under 1 years old were reunified, and this declined steadily with higher age groups to 4.4% (110) of 16–17 year-olds in out-of-home care being reunified.

Sources: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data tables 10.14, 10.17 and 10.18

Figure 7: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, by whether they were reunified and age group

Select data type:

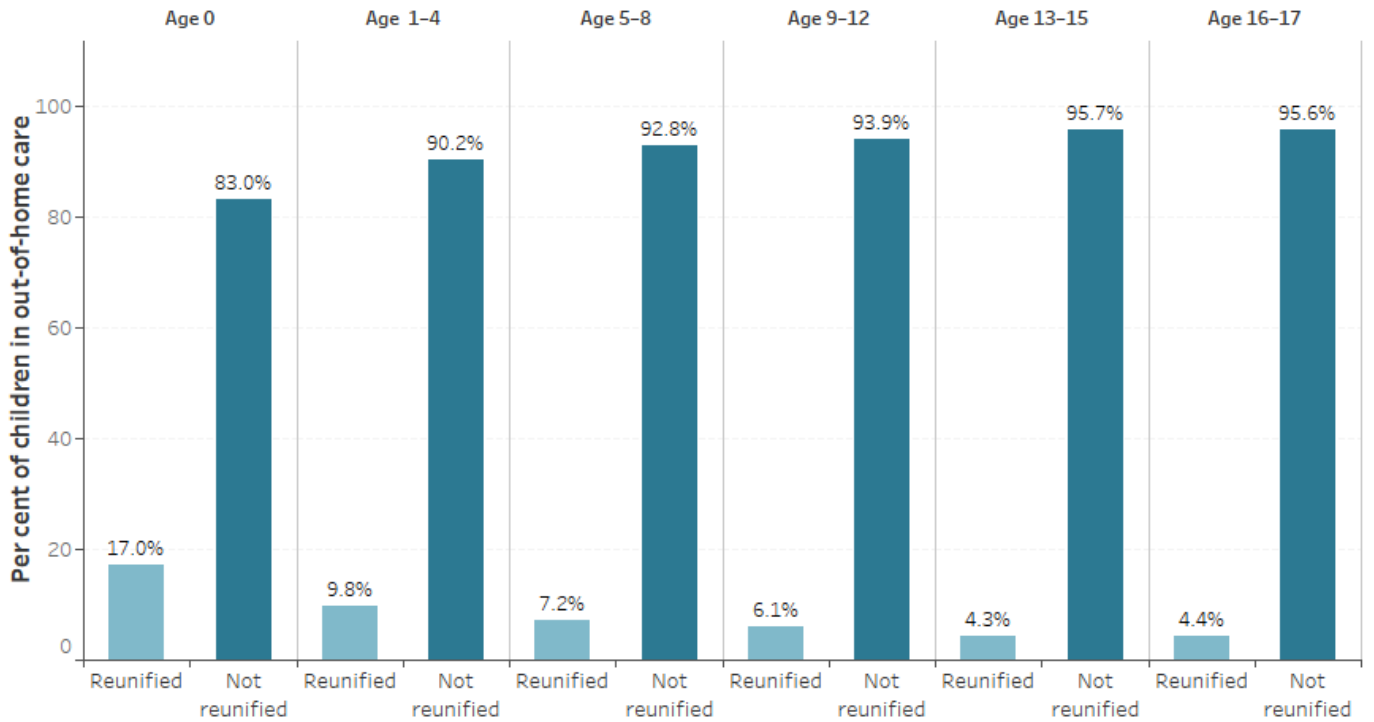
- Number
- Per cent

Select year:

2023-24

NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia, by whether they were reunified and age group



Notes:

1. Due to variability in data availability across jurisdictions, care should be exercised in comparing national data between years.
2. Percentages in this visualisation may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.14.

Figure 8: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were reunified, by time from admission

Select data type:

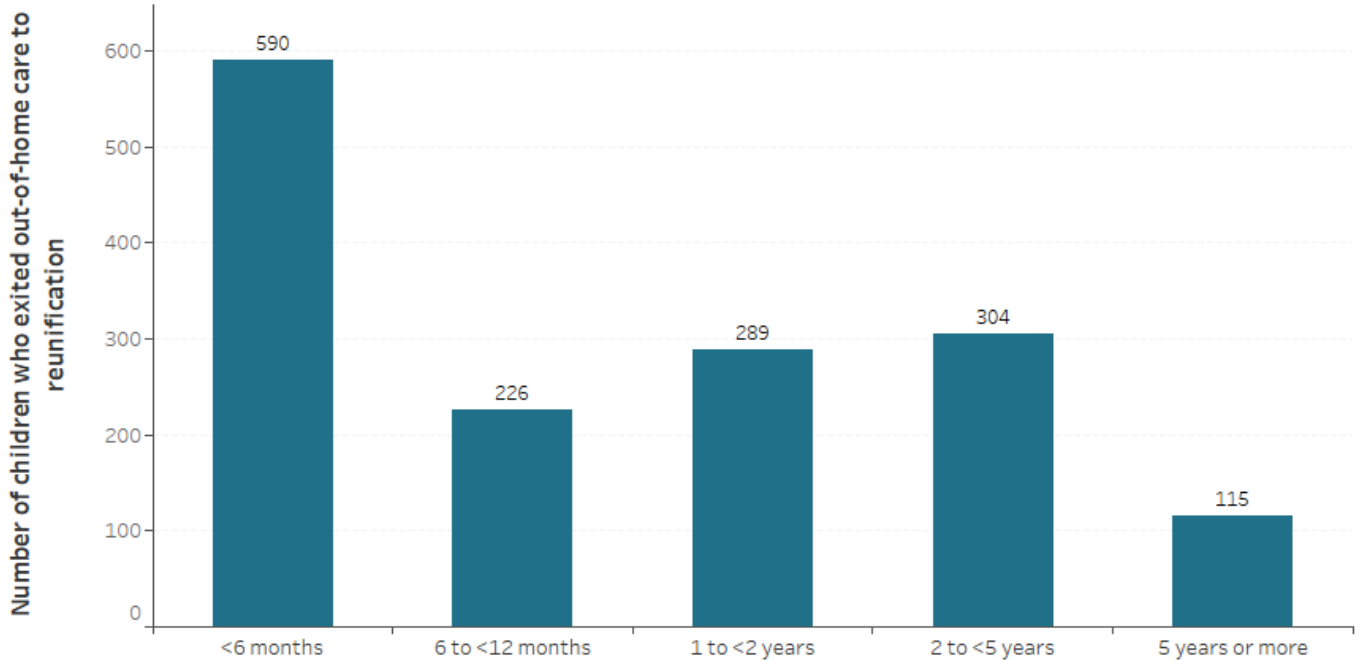
- Number
- Per cent

Select year:

2023-24

NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were reunified in Australia, by time from admission



Notes:

1. These data relate to ATSI CPP indicator 2.10.
2. Data in this visualisation may not match previously published data due to resupplies and the application of consistent counting rules over time where possible.
3. Due to variability in data availability across jurisdictions, care should be exercised in comparing national data between years.
4. Percentages in this visualisation may not add to 100 due to rounding or the inclusion of not stated/unknowns in the total.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.17.

Around 1,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-16 years were reunified in 2022-23*. Of these, 85% (1,400) did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months of reunification (Figure 9).

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.19

* These data are from the 2023-24 data collection. The collection covers a two-year period that allows reporting for events beginning in 2022-23 with a 12-month follow-up period.

Figure 9: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who exited out-of-home care to reunification, by whether they returned to out-of-home care within 12 months

Select data type:

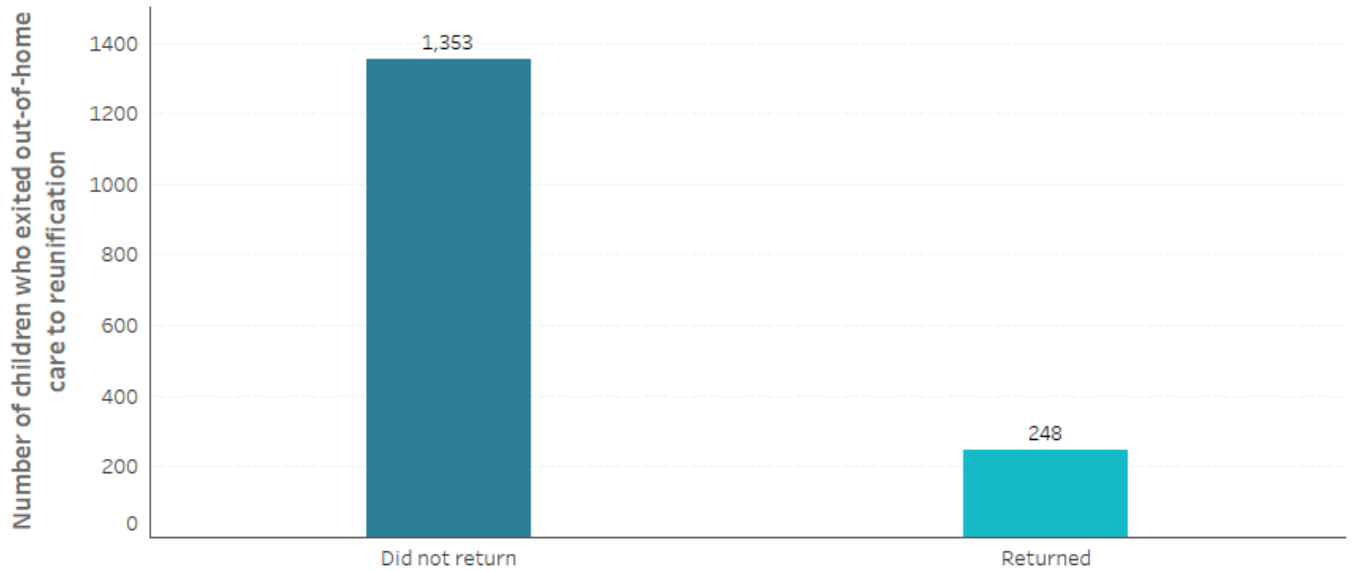
- Number
- Per cent

Year

2022-23

NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
-----	-----	-----	----	----	-----	-----	----	-----------

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who exited out-of-home care to reunification in Australia, by whether they returned to out-of-home care within 12 months



Notes:

1. These data relate to ATSI CPP indicator 2.4.
2. Only children less than 17 are included in this indicator. This is because 12 months following the reunification for a child aged 17, the child would be 18 years of age and no longer in scope for out-of-home care.
3. Data in this visualisation may not match previously published data due to resupplies and the application of consistent counting rules over time where possible.
4. Due to variability in data availability across jurisdictions, care should be exercised in comparing national data between years.
5. Percentages in the visualisation may not add to 100.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.19.

References

AIHW (2022) *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle indicators*, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 26 May 2025.

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SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2019) *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A guide to support implementation*, SNAICC, accessed 26 May 2025.

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Safety of children in care

Key findings

Between 2020–21 and 2023–24, the number of children who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care increased from 1,300 to 1,500.

The proportion of children aged under 5 who were the subject of a substantiation of emotional abuse in care decreased by around 13% between 2022–23 (34%) and 2023–24 (21%).

Since 2020–21, physical and emotional abuse have remained the most common type of primary abuse, together accounting for around 60% of all primary abuse.

What is abuse in care?

In the context of state and territory child protection systems, **abuse in care** refers to the substantiated abuse of children (including those at risk of abuse) aged under 18 who are in out-of-home care, on third party parental responsibility orders, or on other orders that transfer full or partial parental responsibility for the child to an authority of the state or territory. Substantiated abuse in care may involve physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and/or neglect. Substantiations of abuse occur after an investigation has found reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was at risk of being abused, neglected or otherwise harmed.

Acknowledging the impact of child abuse

This report is primarily a data report. As such, it can at times appear to depersonalise some of the pain and suffering behind the statistics. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) would like to acknowledge the serious impact and huge burden that child abuse can have on those affected. It can inflict physical injury, psychological trauma and emotional suffering. These effects can last a lifetime and can affect future generations. It is our endeavour that, by bringing together the available data, we can strengthen the evidence to build a more coherent picture of abuse in care in Australia. This information will help to inform government policies and practice and assist in the planning and delivery of prevention and intervention programs.

Scope of this report

States and territories have different processes, data systems and record keeping methods for substantiations of abuse in care, which substantially impacts the comparability of data across jurisdictions.

Abuse in care reporting may include instances where the person held responsible is:

- a. the approved carer
- b. another person living in the household or care facility, including other children
- c. an employee of the responsible care service/agency or government department
- d. a person not living in the household, where a person in (a) or (c) failed to protect the child, or the action or inaction of a person in (a) or (c) contributed to the abuse.

This report includes data on cases of abuse in care where:

- A substantiation was recorded between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024. This may include historical cases where the abuse occurred before 1 July 2023. Historical cases may include children who were in care at the time the abuse occurred but subsequently exited care before the date of the substantiation (for example, the 2023–24 substantiations data may include children who exited care before 2023–24).
- The child was aged under 18 at the time of the abuse. This may include cases where the child was older at the date of substantiation.

The scope and source of the safety in care data in this report are different to those in the [Report on Government Services](#), so direct comparisons cannot be made between the two reports.

How many children were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care?

In this section

- Introduction
- Type of substantiated abuse
- Rate of substantiated abuse among all children in care

Introduction

In 2023–24, about 1,500 children in Australia were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care. Of these children:

- 50% (750) were girls and 49% (720) were boys, with the remaining 1% (12) of children's sex being not stated.
- 45% (670) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- 38% (560) were aged 10–14 at the time of substantiation.

Sources: *CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care*, data tables S9.1, S9.5, and S9.6

While the proportion of boys and girls who were subject of a substantiation of abuse in care were similar, the proportion was slightly higher for younger boys than for younger girls.

- About 5% (79) were boys aged less than 5, and about 4% (62) were girls aged less than 5.
- About 15% (225) were boys aged 5–9, compared to 12% (175) of girls aged 5–9.

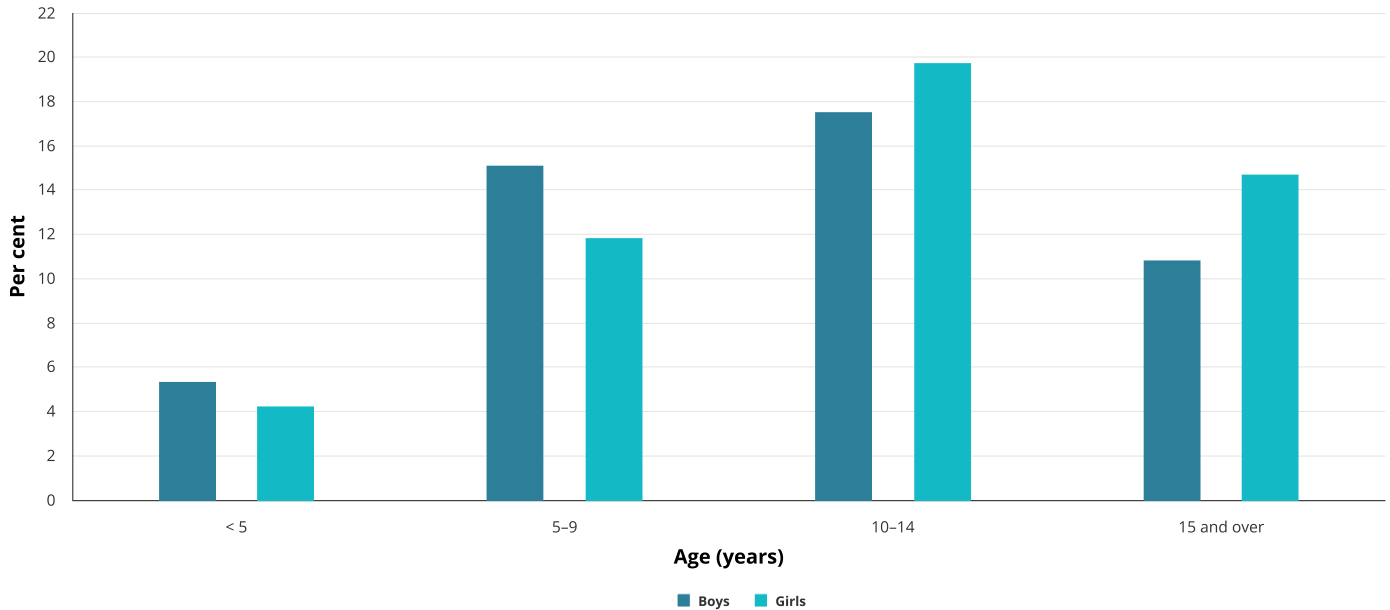
Source: *CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care*, data table S9.6

The proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care was higher for older girls than older boys.

- About 20% (290) were girls aged 10–14, compared to 18% (260) who were boys aged 10–14.
- About 15% (215) were girls aged 15 and over, compared to 11% (160) of boys aged 15 and over (Figure 1).

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care*, data table S9.6

Figure 1: Children who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care, by age and sex, 2023–24



Source: *CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care*, data table S9.2

Type of substantiated abuse

The type of substantiated abuse presented in this section is the 'primary' type of abuse or neglect – the type of abuse that is considered most likely to place the child at risk or be most severe in the short term.

In 2023–24, emotional (30% or 450) and physical abuse (27% or 405) were the most common primary types of abuse for all children in care.

Source: *CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care*, data table S9.2

For boys (about 720), the most common forms of substantiated abuse were:

- emotional abuse (31% or 220)
- physical abuse (30% or 220) (Figure 2).

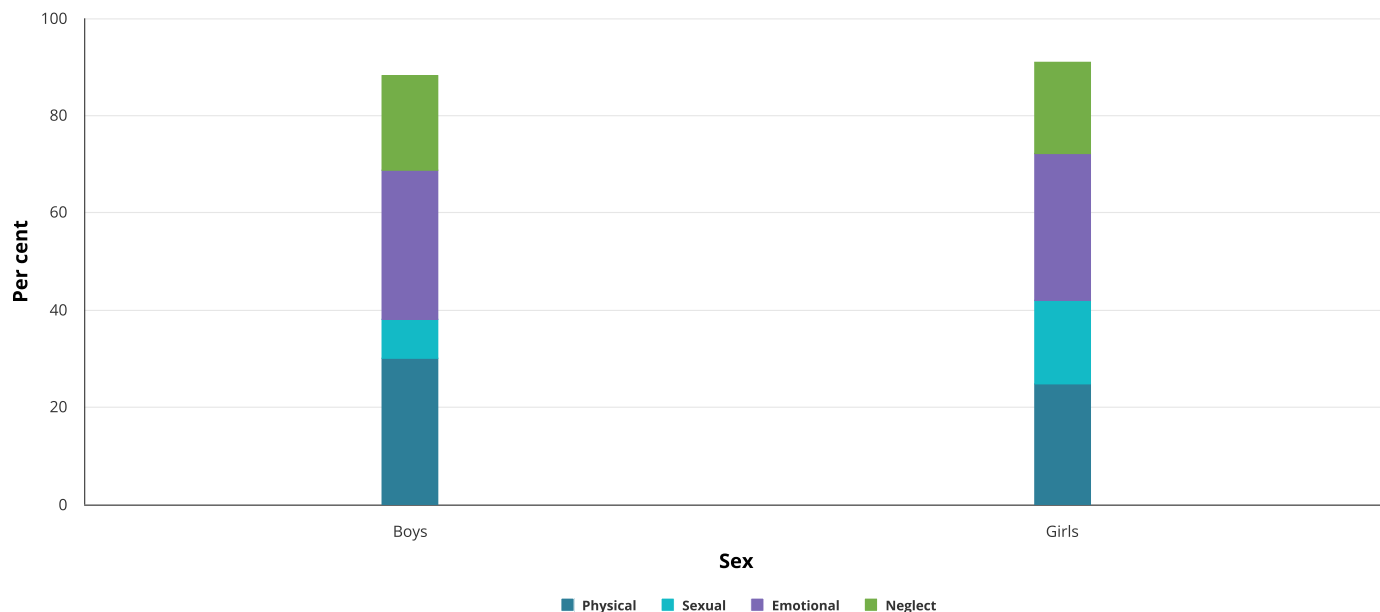
For girls (about 750), the most common forms of substantiated abuse were:

- emotional abuse (30% or 225)
- physical abuse (25% or 185) (Figure 2).

The proportion of substantiated sexual abuse was higher among girls (17.2% or 130) than boys (7.9% or 57), while the proportion of substantiated neglect was slightly higher among boys (20% or 140) than girls (19% or 140).

Source: CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care, data table S9.5

Figure 2: Children who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care, by type of abuse and sex, 2023–24



Source: CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care, data table S9.5

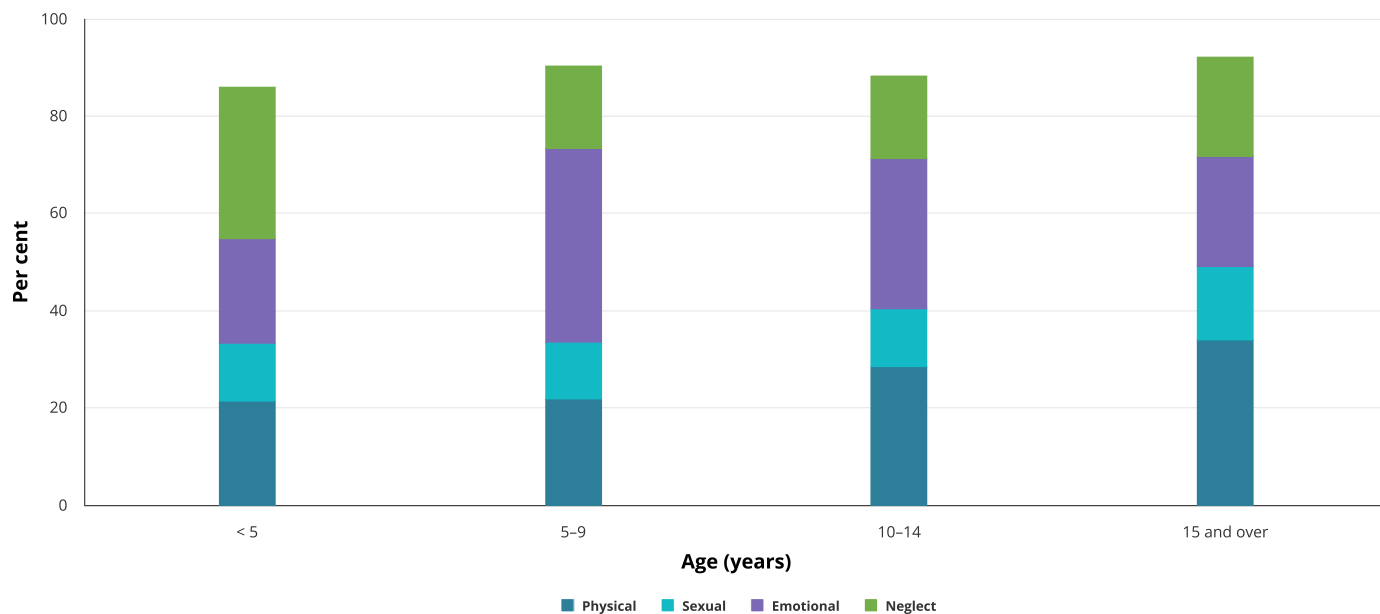
The most common type of substantiated abuse varied by age groups. Among those:

- aged under 5 the most common abuse type was neglect (31% or 44)
- aged 5–9 the most common abuse type was emotional abuse (40% or 160)
- aged 10–14 the most common abuse type was emotional abuse (31% or 170)
- aged 15 and over the most common abuse type was physical abuse (34% or 130) (Figure 3).

Across all age groups, sexual abuse was most common among children aged 10–14 (35% or 66).

Source: CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care, data table S9.4

Figure 3: Children who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care, by type of abuse and age, 2023–24



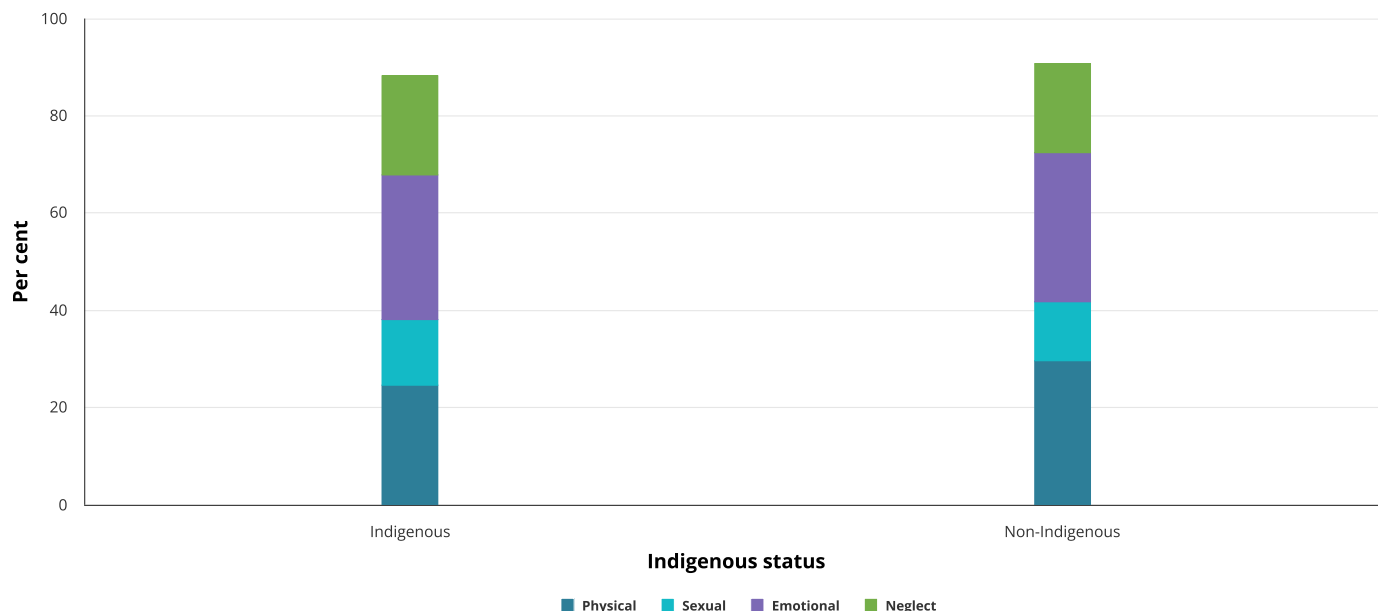
Source: CPA 2023–24: Safety of children in care, data table S9.4

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (665) and non-Indigenous children (815) subject to a substantiation of abuse in care, the incidence of primary type of abuse was similar:

- Emotional abuse was the most common type of substantiated abuse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (30% or 200) and non-Indigenous children (31% or 250).
- Physical abuse was the second most common type of substantiated abuse for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (25% or 165) and non-Indigenous children (30% or 240).
- Neglect was the primary type of abuse substantiated for 20% (135) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 18% (150) of non-Indigenous children
- Substantiations of sexual abuse was the least common type of substantiated abuse for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (14% or 90) and non-Indigenous children (12% or 100) (Figure 4).

Source: CPA 2023–24: *Safety of children in care*, data table S9.3

Figure 4: Children who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care, by type of abuse and Indigenous status, 2023–24



Source: CPA 2023–24: *Safety of children in care*, data table S9.4

Rate of substantiated abuse among all children in care

Currently, it is not possible to estimate the rate of substantiated abuse among all children in care because:

- Data are based on the date of substantiation (not date of abuse), so may include historical cases of children who were in care at the time the abuse occurred, but subsequently exited care before the date of the substantiation. This may mean it is not possible to identify a directly comparable numerator and denominator for use in rate calculations. It may only be feasible to identify a 'best estimate' of all children in the in-care population to use as a denominator.
- Abuse in care substantiations data include children in out-of-home care, and children on selected types of court orders who may be in other (non-out-of-home care) living arrangements. Currently, there are no readily available data on other living arrangements. Data are readily available for the out-of-home care population; however, this is a narrower scope than the abuse in care substantiations data (so any comparisons may overestimate the rate of abuse in care).

Improving national data on safety in care

This report presents data from the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set: a national data collection on safety in care. The departments responsible for child protection in each state and territory supply data to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) for analysis and national reporting.

This collection was established in response to 3 [recommendations](#) from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Although the Royal Commission had a specific focus on sexual abuse, the national data collection also includes physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Work is continuing to enhance and expand the collection and reporting of these data.

State and territory governments, in response to the findings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, have agreed to implement a range of data reforms. These include:

- developing nationally agreed key terms and definitions in relation to child sexual abuse
- prioritising enhancements to the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
- adopting a nationally consistent definition for child sexual exploitation.

A number of other Royal Commission recommendations proposed changes to various aspects of the out-of-home care system to better protect vulnerable children from sexual abuse while in care. The efforts of the Australian, state and territory governments to implement the Royal Commission recommendations are described in [annual progress reports](#).

To provide a more complete understanding of the complexities of abuse in care, future national reporting will endeavour to include:

- information about children who were the subject of multiple substantiations and/or had multiple types of abuse in care
- a 'best estimate' of the rate of abuse among all children in care
- expanded data to progress the Royal Commission recommendations (for example, additional child demographics, further information on when and where the abuse occurred and who perpetrated the abuse, along with data on sexual exploitation).

Pathways from out-of-home care

In 2023–24, 2 in 5 (41%) children who exited out-of-home care were reunified with their family

Between 2019–20 and 2023–24, most children in out-of-home care (around 87%) had less than 3 placements within 2 years

In 2023–24, of the 8,700 children who exited out-of-home care (excluding those who aged out), almost half (48%) exited within 1 year of admission

The proportion of children reunified with their families who did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months has increased, from 83% in 2018–19 to 87% in 2022–23

Introduction

When children enter out-of-home care, state and territory child protection departments undertake permanency planning processes to provide children with safe, stable, and ongoing care arrangements. State and territory child protection departments will work towards reunifying children with their families where it is safe to do so and it is in the best interest of the child.

Where state and territory child protection departments assess there is an ongoing risk of abuse or neglect to the child if they were to remain with their families, alternative long-term arrangements may be explored (DSS 2021), for example:

- Placement in third-party parental care.
 - This refers to placements for children under third-party parental responsibility orders. These orders transfer all legal duties, powers, responsibilities and authority from the parents to a nominated person(s) deemed appropriate by the court. The nominated person may be a relative or an officer of the respective state or territory department.
- Adoption from out-of-home care.
 - This includes both local adoptions and known child adoptions.
- Transition to other placements.
 - Other placements refer to care arrangements that are out-of-scope of the national definition of out-of-home care. For example, a non-funded placement where the child or young person lives independently.

When young people turn 18 years old, they are discharged from out-of-home care as the legal responsibility of state and territory governments ceases. However, all state and territory child protection departments have policies and legislation that provide continued support beyond the scope of out-of-home care on a needs basis until they reach at least 21 years of age (AIFS, 2016).

Refer to the [Glossary](#) for more information on the different pathways from out-of-home care.

The Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework (POPF)

The Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework (POPF) was developed to measure jurisdictional performance on achieving permanency outcomes for children in out-of-home care (CSM 2018).

Refer to the [POPF indicators dashboard](#) for more information on the 14 indicators relating to permanency outcomes.

Considerations for pathways from out-of-home care

Differences in jurisdictional policies and practice can affect the comparability of data relevant to pathways from out-of-home care, including:

- There is no nationally agreed definition for reunification. As such, reporting permanency events relating to reunification is based on local definitions of reunification.
- Third-party parental responsibility orders vary across jurisdictions, with the biggest difference relating to the provision of ongoing case management in some third-party parental responsibility orders in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland.

Refer to the [Appendices](#) for more information on differences in jurisdictions' policy and practice

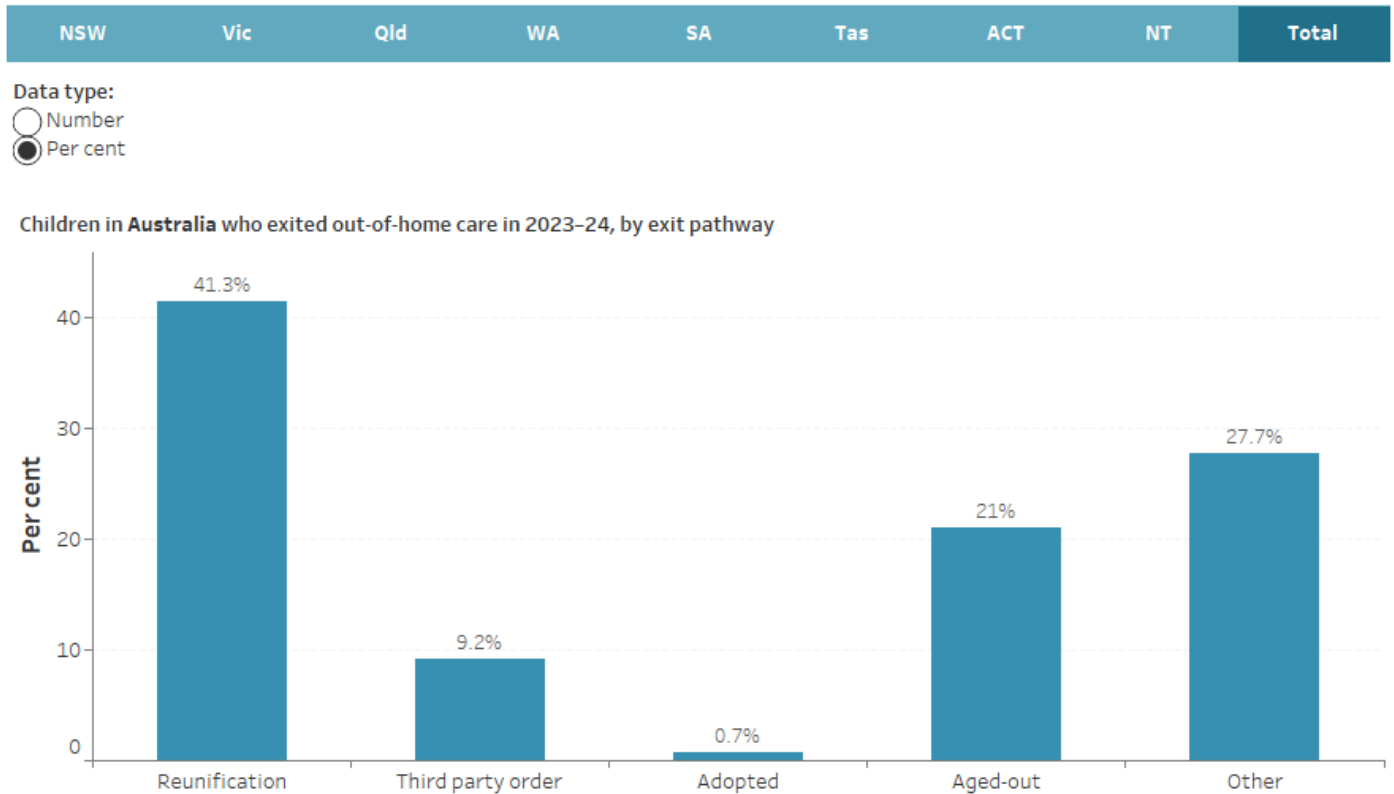
Pathways from out-of-home care

In 2023–24, around 11,000 children were discharged from out-of-home care through various pathways. Of these:

- 41% (4,500) were reunified with their family.
- 21% (2,300) aged-out.
- 9.2% (1,000) were placed on third-party parental responsibility orders.
- 0.7% (77) were adopted.
- 28% (3,000) did not fall into any of the above exit pathways. See Figure 1 for more information.

Source: CPA 2023–24: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.13

Figure 1: Children who exited out-of-home care, by exit pathway



Notes:

1. Children discharged on their 18th birthday are included in this figure.
2. Percentages in the figure may not add to 100 due to rounding or the inclusion of not stated/unknowns in the total.
3. Aged out: children who do not fall into the reunification, third-party order, and adopted categories, and their 18th birthday is within a week of the out-of-home care discharge date.
4. Other: children who do not fall into the reunification, third-party order, adopted and aged-out categories. This would include children who are discharged from out-of-home care and exit to a placement that is not in scope for out-of-home care (e.g. a non-funded placement where they live independently, with parents on a trial reunification, in detention etc.). Refer to Additional Notes section for Table 10.13 in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children technical specifications for more details.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.13.

How many children were reunified?

Reunification is often the preferred goal when children are placed in out-of-home care, provided that it is safe for the child to return home (Cunningham et al. 2021). In 2023–24, there were 4,600 reunifications for children in out-of-home care (this includes children who had multiple reunifications in the reporting period). Of the children who were reunified:

- Most were reunified with their birth parents (95% or 4,300).
- 44% (2,000) were reunified within 6 months from admission to out-of-home care, followed by 18% (800) who were reunified between 2 to less than 5 years (Figure 3).

Among children in care, those aged under one year had the highest proportion of reunifications, with 20% (320) of all children in this age group being reunified. This was followed by 13% (1,200) of children aged 1–4 years.

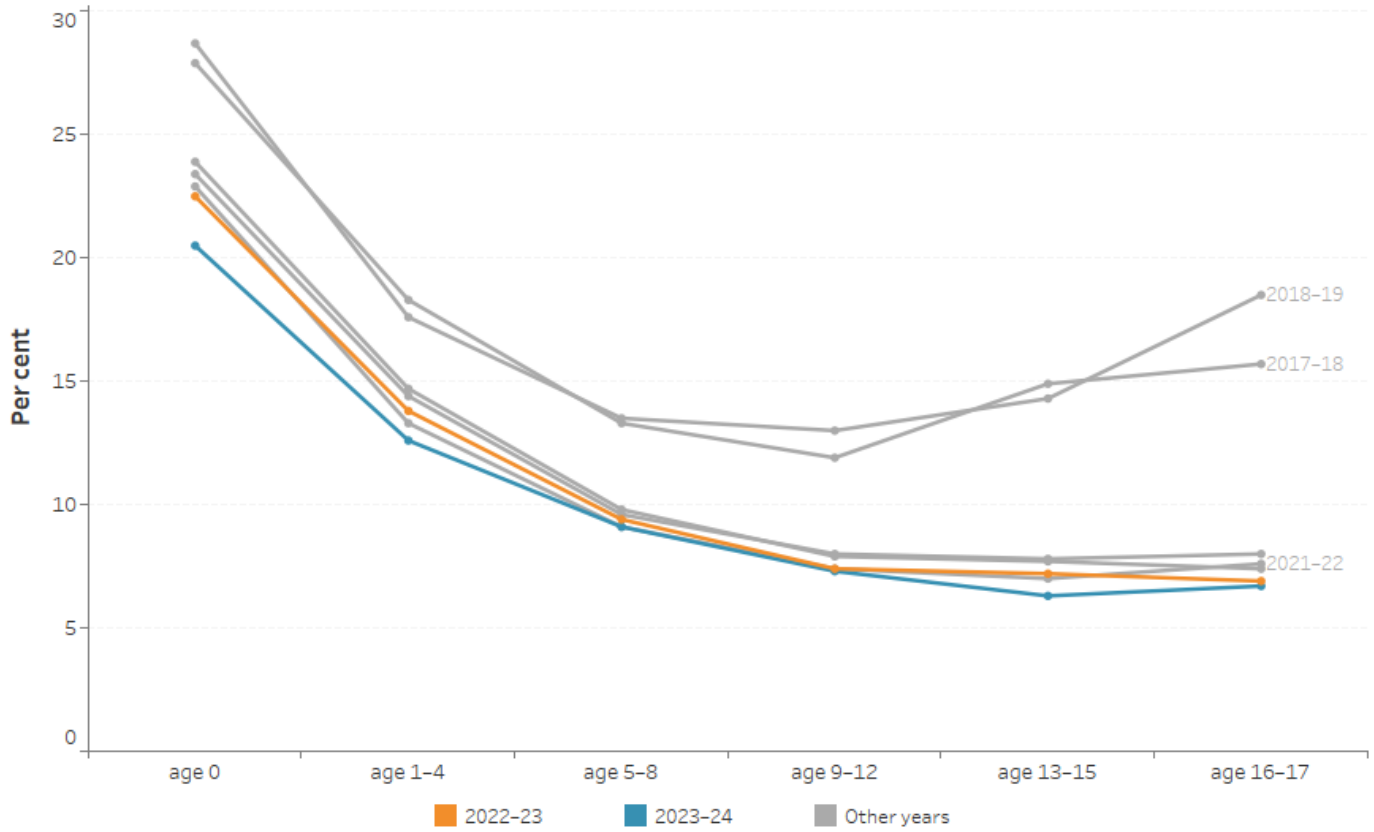
Sources: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data tables 10.14, 10.17 and 10.18

Figure 2: Children who exited out-of-home care to reunification, by age group

Per cent					Number				
NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total	

Select year:
2022-23

Children in Australia in out-of-home care who were reunified in the reporting period, by age group

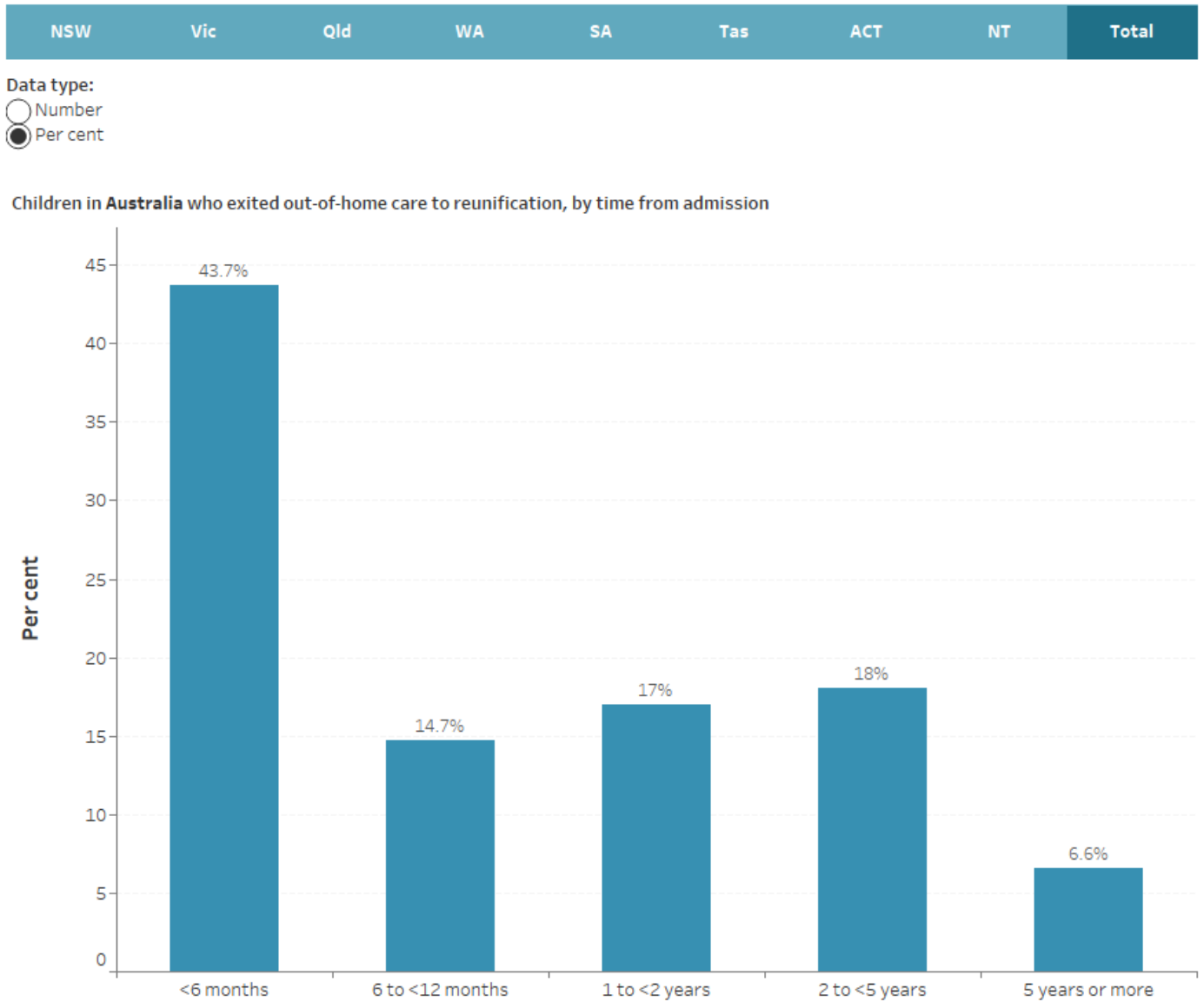


Notes:

1. Due to variability in data availability across jurisdictions, care should be exercised in comparing national data between years.
2. Percentages in the figure may not add to 100 due to rounding or the inclusion of not stated/unknowns in the total.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.14.

Figure 3: Children who exited out-of-home care to reunification, by time from admission



Notes:

1. Due to variability in data availability across jurisdictions, care should be exercised in comparing national data between years.
2. Percentages in the figure may not add to 100 due to rounding or the inclusion of not stated/unknowns in the total.

Source: CPA 2023–24 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.17.

How long were children in out-of-home care before exiting?

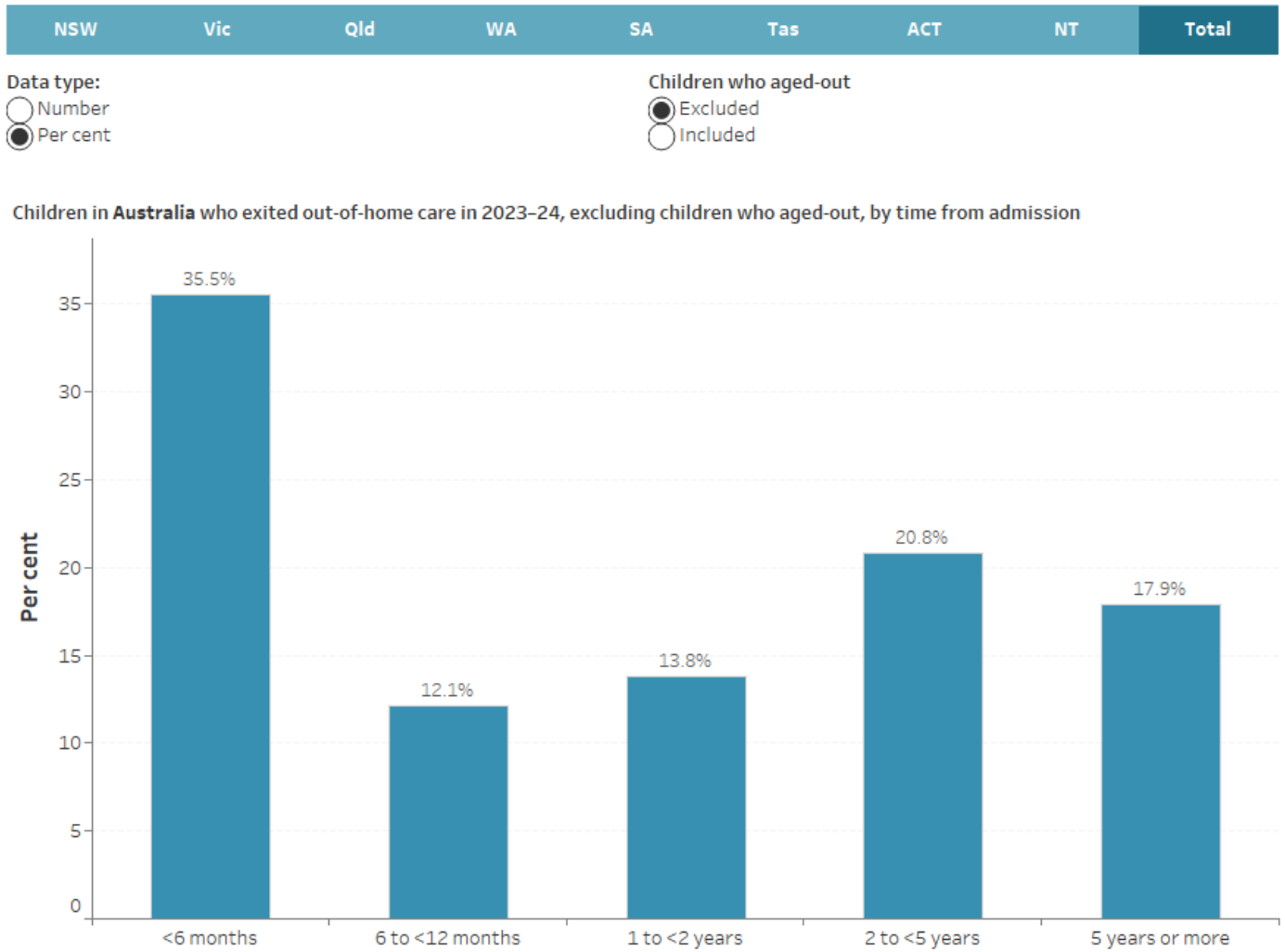
The length of time a child spends in out-of-home care varies. Generally, the goal is to ensure that children exit out-of-home care as quickly as possible. However, this must be balanced with prioritising their safety, stability, and wellbeing (South Australian Department of Child Protection 2022).

Excluding children who aged-out, in 2023–24, out of the 8,700 children who were discharged from out-of-home care:

- 36% (3,100) of children exited care within 6 months of admission.
- 12% (1,000) exited between 6 and 12 months.
- 14% (1,200) exited between 1 and 2 years.
- 21% (1,800) exited after 2 to less than 5 years in care.
- 18% (1,600) exited after 5 years or more in care.

Source: CPA 2023–24: POPF indicators and Pathways from out-of-home care, data table 11.13

Figure 4: Children who exited out-of-home care, by time from admission



Note:

1. Percentages in the figure may not add to 100 due to rounding or the inclusion of not stated/unknowns in the total.

Sources: CPA 2023–24: POPF Indicators and Pathways from out-of-home care, data table 11.13 and CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.12

At what age were children exiting out-of-home care?

Children aged 15–17 (including those who aged out of the system), were discharged from out-of-home care at the highest rate of 4.4 per 1,000. In comparison, children aged 14 and under were discharged at a rate of 1.3 to 1.5 per 1,000.

When children who aged-out from out-of-home care are excluded, the rate of children who were discharged from out-of-home care remained the highest among children aged 15–17 (2.0 per 1,000). Rates were lower for children aged less than one year (1.5 per 1,000), children aged 1–4 and children aged 10–14 (1.4 per 1,000), and children aged 5–9 (1.3 per 1,000). Overall, the rates for children aged 14 and under were consistent across age groups, in contrast to the higher rate observed among children aged 15–17.

Sources: CPA 2023–24: Insights, supplementary data table S5.2 and CPA 2023–24: POPF indicators and Pathways from out-of-home care, data table 11.14

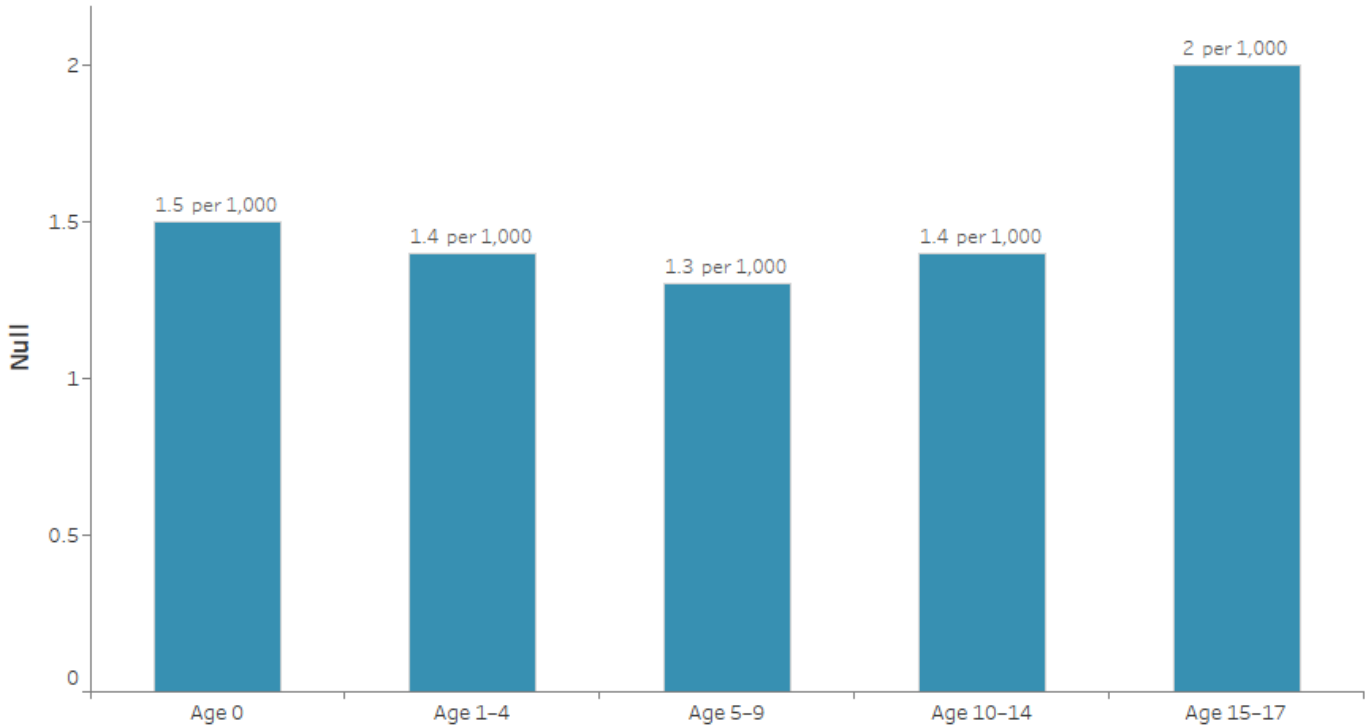
Figure 5: Children who exited out-of-home care, by age group

NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
-----	-----	-----	----	----	-----	-----	----	-------

Data type:
 Number
 Rate per 1,000

Children who aged-out
 Excluded
 Included

Children in Australia who exited out-of-home care in 2023–24, excluding children who aged-out, by age group



Note:

1. The data for children exiting care include those who left care and had not returned in less than 60 days. Where a child exits care more than once during the year, the first discharge is counted.

Source: CPA 2023–24: POPF Indicators and Pathways from out-of-home care, data table 11.14 and CPA 2023–24: Insights, data table S5.2

How many children did not return to out-of-home care?

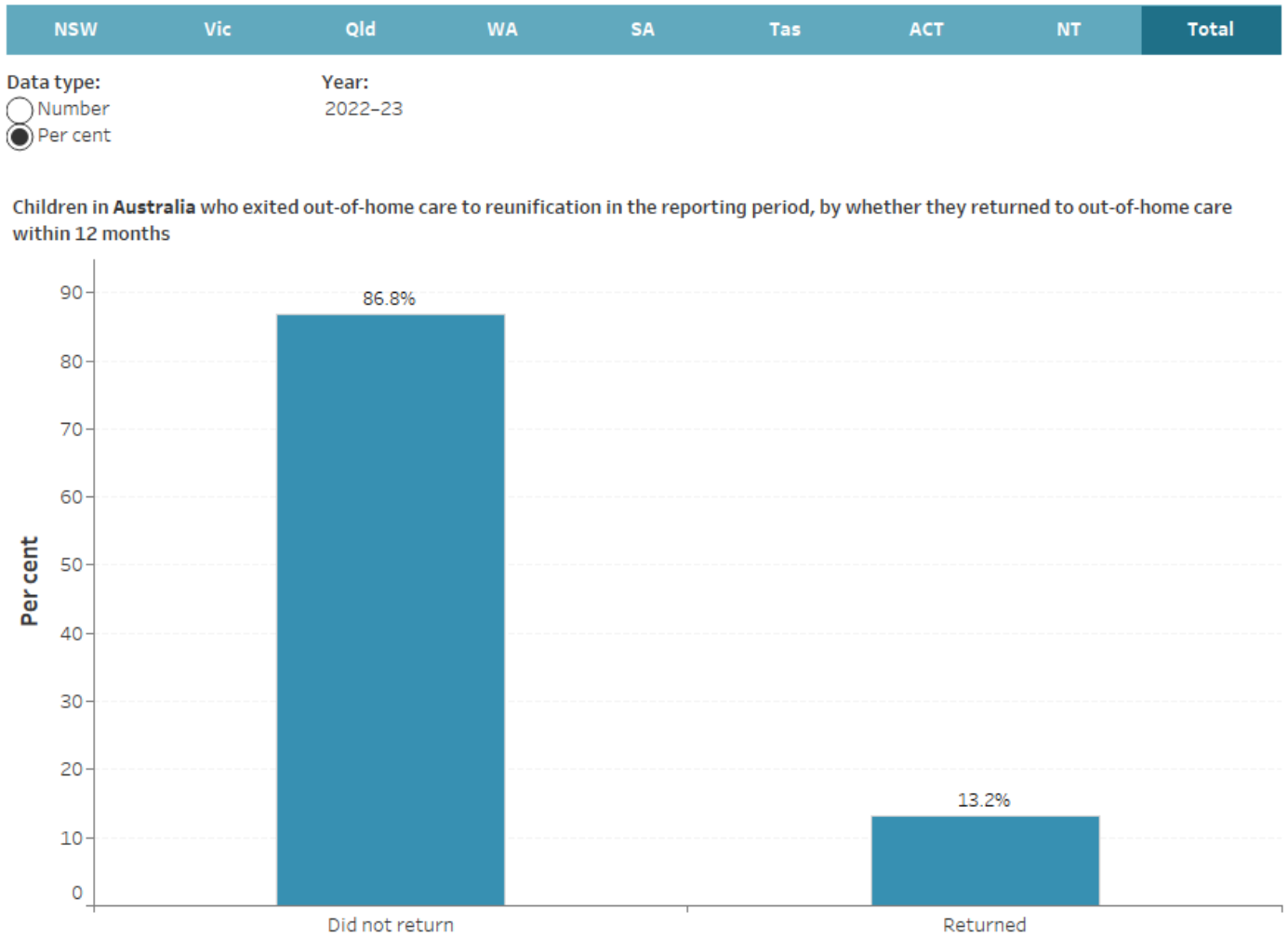
Data on whether children re-entered out-of-home care following an exit from care are reported for the previous financial year (2022–23); this allows time for follow-up 12 months after exiting care.

When children leave out-of-home care via various exit pathways, it is important to ensure the children remain in living arrangements that are stable and supportive (Tucker et al. 2025).

Around 4,600 children aged 0–16 years were reunified in 2022–23. Of these, 87% (4,000) of children did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months of reunification. The proportion of children who did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months of reunification has steadily increased over time from 83% in 2016–17 to 87% in 2022–23.

Source: CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.19

Figure 6: Children who exited out-of-home care to reunification in the reporting period, by whether they returned to out-of-home care within 12 months



Notes:

1. Only children less than 17 are included. This is because 12 months following the reunification for a child aged 17, the child would be 18 years of age and no longer in scope for out-of-home care.
2. Due to variability in data availability across jurisdictions, care should be exercised in comparing national data between years.
3. Percentages in the figure may not add to 100 due to rounding or the inclusion of not stated/unknowns in the total.

Source: CPA 2023-24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.19.

Most children who exited out-of-home care to reunification, third-party parental responsibility order or adoption did not return within 12 months (Figures 6 and 7). Of the children who exited to these pathways in 2022-23:

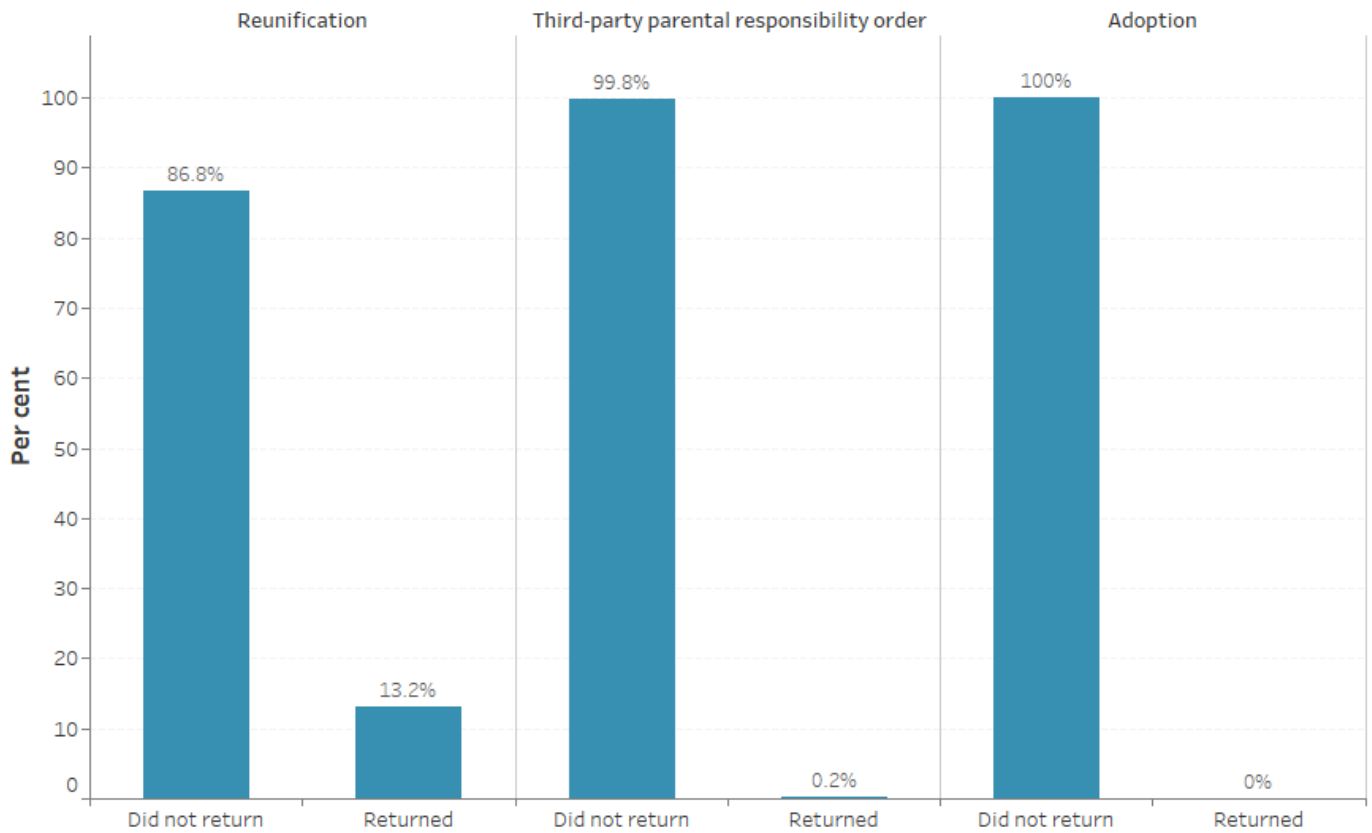
- None of the children who were adopted returned to out-of-home care within 12 months.
- 0.2% of children who exited to a third-party parental responsibility order returned to out-of-home care within 12 months.
- 13.2% of children who were reunified returned to out-of-home care within 12 months.

Figure 7: Children who exited out-of-home care to reunification, third-party parental responsibility order or adoption in the reporting period, by whether they returned to out-of-home care within 12 months

Data type:
 Number
 Per cent

Year:
 2022–23

Children who exited out-of-home care to reunification, third-party parental responsibility order or adoption in the reporting period, by whether they returned to out-of-home care within 12 months



Notes:

1. Percentages in the figure may not add to 100 due to rounding or the inclusion of not stated/unknowns in the total.

Source: CPA 2023–24: *Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators*, data tables 11.5 and 11.6, CPA 2023–24: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, data table 10.19

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Cunningham T, Bastian C, Seymour K and Wendt, S. (2021) [Reunification: Rapid Literature Review](#), Flinders University.

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Osmond J and Tilbury C (2012) [‘Permanency planning concepts’](#), *Children Australia*, 37(3):100–107, doi:10.1017/cha.2012.28.

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Tucker E, O’Donnell M, Krakouer J and Octoman O (2025) [‘Reinvolvement after returning home: A systematic review of the factors associated with post-reunification child protection involvement’](#), *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 167:107515, doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2025.107515.

Indicators

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Child Placement Principle indicators

Permanency Outcomes Performance
Framework indicators

National Out-of-Home Care Standards
indicators

For the 2022–23 Child protection Australia indicators, see [Child protection Australia 2022–23, Indicators](#).

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ATSICPP indicators

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle indicators

Implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) by states and territories is designed to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and out-of-home care systems. It also aims to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children connected to their family, community, culture and country (SNAICC 2017; Tilbury 2013). At the core of the ATSICPP are the 5 elements of:

- Prevention
- Partnership
- Placement
- Participation
- Connection

The ATSICPP indicators measure progress towards the implementation of the ATSICPP in child protection and out-of-home care systems and are grouped under each of the 5 core ATSICPP elements (SNAICC 2017). Detailed information on the ATSICPP can be found on the website of [SNAICC the Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children](#).

This data visualisation presents data on the 11 indicators for which data are currently available. These 11 indicators relate to the Placement and Connection elements of the ATSICPP.

The remaining indicators are still undergoing development. These include indicators relating to the Prevention, Partnership and Participation elements, for which data are currently not available for reporting.

For further context on the data below, please refer to the [technical specifications](#) and [data tables](#).

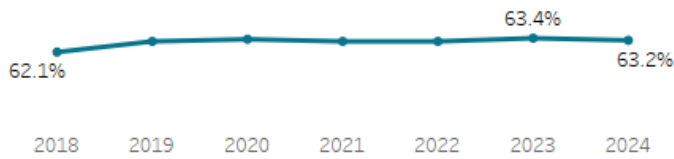
Figure: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle indicators dashboard

What is the Placement element?

Placing children in out-of-home care in accordance with the established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) placement hierarchy.

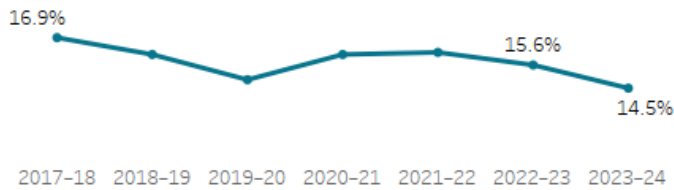


Indicator 1.1



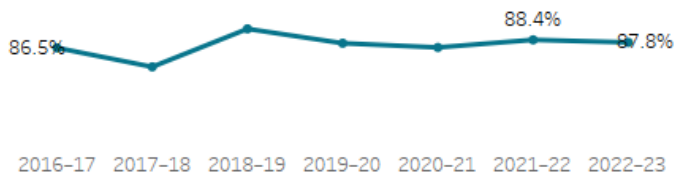
In Australia at 30 June 2024, **63.2%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living with relatives or kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers. This is a **0.2** percentage point decrease since 2023.

Indicator 1.2



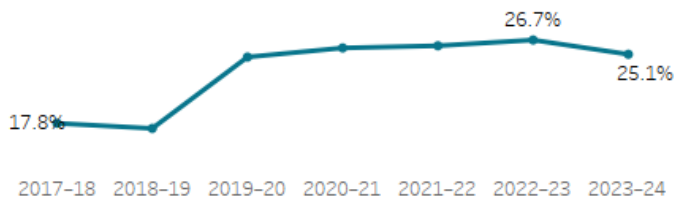
In Australia across 2023-24, **14.5%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were reconnected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin through placement change. This is a **1.1** percentage point decrease since 2022-23.

Indicator 1.3



In Australia across 2022-23, **87.8%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were reconnected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin through placement change and remained with relatives and kin for 12 months or more. This is a **0.6** percentage point decrease since 2021-22.

Indicator 1.4



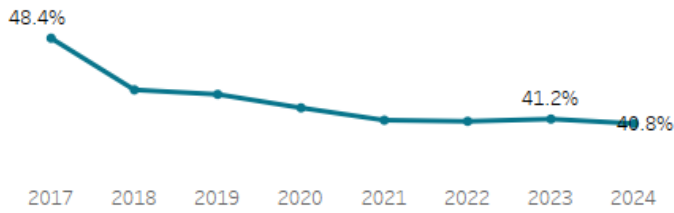
In Australia across in 2023-24, **25.1%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin for their first placement. This is a **1.5** percentage point decrease since 2022-23.

What is the Connection element?

Maintaining and supporting connections to family, community, culture and country for children in out-of-home care.

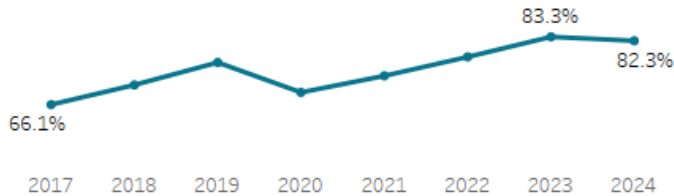


Indicator 2.1
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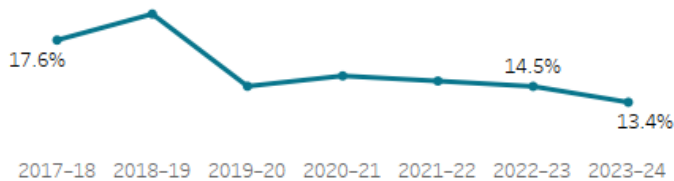
In Australia at 30 June 2024, **40.8%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal and Torres Islander relatives or kin, or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers. This is a **0.4** percentage point decrease since 2023.

Indicator 2.2



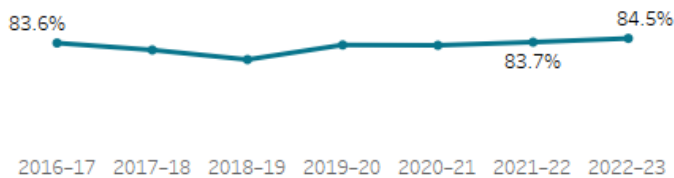
In Australia at 30 June 2024, **82.3%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care have a current, documented and approval cultural support plan. This is a **1.0** percentage point decrease since 2023.

Indicator 2.3



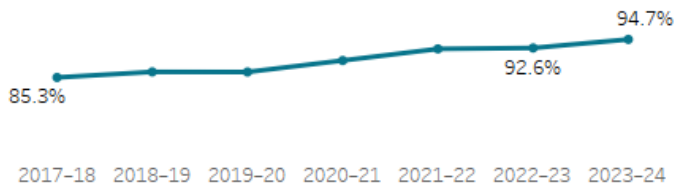
In Australia across 2023-24, **13.4%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care (excluding children on long-term guardianship orders) were reunified. This is a **1.1** percentage point decrease since 2022-23.

Indicator 2.4



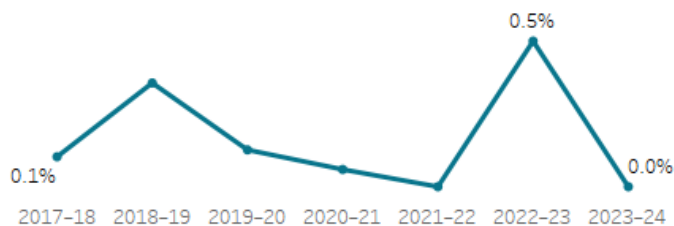
In Australia at 30 June 2022-23, **84.5%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-16 who exited out-of-home care to reunification in the reporting period and did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months. This is a **0.8** percentage point increase since 2021-22.

Indicator 2.8



In Australia in 2023-24, **94.7%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were reunified, were reunified with their birth parents. This is a **2.1** percentage point increase since 2022-23.

Indicator 2.9

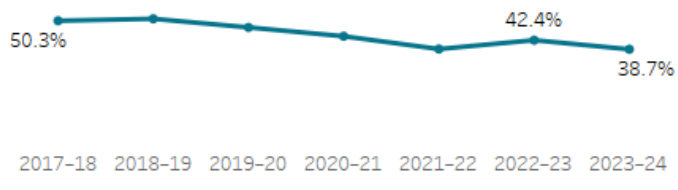


In Australia in 2023-24, **0%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were reunified with relatives or kin (excludes birth parents). This is a **0.5** percentage point decrease since 2022-23.

Indicator 2.10

Time from admission less than 6 months

In Australia in 2023-24, **38.7%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were in out-of-home care for less than 6 months were reunified.



Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators

The Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework (POPF) was developed to measure jurisdictional performance on achieving permanency outcomes for children in out-of-home care (Seselja 2017; CSM 2018).

Table 1 presents data on 14 indicators under POPF. Aspects of permanency covered by the indicators include:

- preservation (where families are supported to keep children at home safely)
- reunification (where children are returned home safely after time in out-of-home care)
- other permanency outcomes where reunification is not possible (third-party parental responsibility order or adoption)
- stability of permanency outcomes (whether they are still in place after 12 months).
- Timely and informed decision-making related to permanency arrangements (the achievement of orders and permanency outcomes within 2 years of admission to out-of-home care).

Indicators relate to children who are in long term out-of-home care. These indicators focus on children who have been in out-of-home care for more than 2 years, covering:

- legal stability (which legal orders children are placed on and how long it takes to achieve their order)
- placement stability (time in placement and number of placements)

A summary of all POPF indicators is provided in the table below for quick reference. For further context on the data below, please refer to the Child Protection Australia 2023–24: Pathways from out-of-home care [technical specifications](#) and [data tables](#), and the Child Protection Australia 2023–24 [appendices](#).

Table 1: POPF indicators 2023–24 – national summary

Indicator	National data
Domain 1	Permanent, safe and stable care
1.1a	About 44,900 children (7.7 per 1,000) aged 0–17 were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2024. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Insights</i> , data table S5.5.
1.1b	About 31,200 children (69%) aged 0–17 in out-of-home care at 30 June 2024 had been in out-of-home care for 2 years or more. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Insights</i> , data table S5.14.
Domain 2	Preservation
1.2	81% of children aged 0–16 who were the subject of a substantiation in 2022–23 were not admitted to out-of-home care within 12 months of the substantiation. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.1.
Domain 3	Reunification and permanent care
1.3	16% of children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care (excluding children on long-term guardianship orders) were reunified in 2023–24. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children</i> , data table 10.15.
1.4	2.0% of children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care received a third-party parental responsibility order in 2023–24. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.2.
1.5	Less than 1% of children (70 children) aged 0–17 in out-of-home care were adopted in 2023–24. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.3.
1.6	90% of children aged 0–16 who exited out-of-home care to a permanency outcome in 2022–23 did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.4.
1.6a	87% of children aged 0–16 who exited out-of-home care to reunification in 2022–23 did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children</i> , data table 10.19.
1.6b	99.8% of children aged 0–16 who exited out-of-home care to a third-party parental responsibility order in 2022–23 did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.5.

1.6c	All children aged 0–16 who exited out-of-home care to adoption in 2022–23 did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.6.
Domain 4	Stability
1.7a	81% of children aged 2–17 in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2024 were on long-term guardianship orders. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.7.
1.7b	87% of children aged 2–17 in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2024 experienced less than 3 placements in the last 2 years. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.8.
Domain 5	Timely and informed decision-making on permanency
2.1	96% of children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care received a finalised care and protection order within 2 years of admission to out-of-home care in 2023–24. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.10.
2.2	72% of children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care received a permanency outcome or long-term guardianship order within 2 years of admission to out-of-home care in 2023–24. Source: <i>CPA 2023–24: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework indicators</i> , data table 11.11.

References

CSM (Community Services Ministers) (1 June 2018) [Community Services Ministers' Meeting Communiqué](#), [media release], Australian Government.

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National Out-of-Home Care Standards indicators

The *National Out-of-Home Care Standards* (the National Standards) were a priority under the *National Framework 2009–2020*. The National Standards were designed to drive improvements and deliver consistency in the quality of care so that children in out-of-home care have the same opportunities as their peers to reach their potential in life wherever they live in Australia. The National Standards focussed on children and young people under 18 whose care arrangements were ordered through the relevant children's court and parental responsibility for the child was transferred to the Minister/Chief Executive.

The successor to the National Framework – Safe & Supported: *The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* (Safe and Supported) was endorsed by Community Services Ministers and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group and released in December 2021. Safe and Supported is a 10-year whole-of-nation strategy that aims to reduce rates of child abuse and neglect by transforming systems and services that support vulnerable and/or disadvantaged children and families through governments partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

With the aim to refresh the National-Out-of-Home Care Standards and Indicators, this release updates data under the previous National Standards as indicator reporting related to safe and supported is currently under development.

A summary of NOOHCS indicators with updated 2023–24 data is provided in the table below for quick reference. For further context on the data below, please refer to the CPA 2023–24: National Out-of-Home Care Standards (NOOHCS) indicators [data tables](#). For information on previously released updates to the NOOHCS indicators, please refer to the [National framework for protecting Australia's children indicators](#).

Table 1: NOOHCS indicators 2023–24 – national summary

Indicator	National data
Standard 1	Children and young people are provided with stability and security during their time in care
1.1 Stability	64% of children aged 0–17 exiting out-of-home care had 1 or 2 placements in 2023–24
1.2 Safety	2.1% of children aged 0–17 were subject to a substantiation while in out-of-home care in 2023–24
1.4 Stability during the year	93% of children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care had 1 or 2 placements in 2023–24
Standard 3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities participate in decisions concerning the care and placement of their children and young people
3.1 Placement of Indigenous children	63% of Indigenous children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care were living with Indigenous or non-Indigenous relatives or kin or other Indigenous caregivers in 2023–24
Standard 4	Each child and young person has an individualised plan that details their health, education and other needs
4.1 Case plans	88% of children aged 0–17 have a current documented and approved case plan in 2023–24
Standard 9	Children and young people are supported to safely and appropriately maintain connection with family
9.1 Kinship placement	55% of children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care were placed with relatives or kin in 2023–24
Standard 10	Children and young people in care are supported to develop their identity, safely and appropriately, through contact with their families, friends, culture, spiritual sources and communities and have their life history recorded as they grow up
10.1 Cultural support plans	82% of Indigenous children aged 0–17 in care had a current documented and approved cultural support plan in 2023–24
Standard 12	Carers are assessed and receive relevant ongoing training, development and support, in order to provide quality care
12.1a Foster care households	There were 8,000 foster carer households with a placement at 30 June 2024
12.1b Foster carer households during the year	There were 11,300 foster carer households with a placement during 2023–24
12.2 Foster carer numbers	During 2023–24, 910 households were commencing foster care and 1,300 were exiting foster care. On an average day in 2023–24 there were 5,900 foster carer households
Standard 13	Children and young people have a transition from care plan commencing at 15 years old which details support to be provided after leaving care
13.1 Leaving care plan	72% of young people aged 15 and over had a current documented and approved leaving care plan

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2023–24

Technical notes

Rounding of data

Data in this report have been rounded for readability. The following rounding rules have been applied:

- Numbers over 100,000 and under a million are rounded to the nearest multiple of 1,000.
- Numbers between 1,000 and 100,000 are rounded to the nearest multiple of 100.
- Numbers between 500 and 999 are rounded to the nearest multiple of 10.
- Numbers between 100 and 499 are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5.
- Numbers between 10 and 99 are rounded to the nearest whole number.
- Numbers under 10 are rounded to one decimal place.

Care and protection orders

The following rules apply to the counting of admissions, discharges and length of time for care and protection orders:

1. A renewal of an existing order is not counted as an admission. A change to an order is counted as an admission. However, if a new care and protection order is applied in 5 days or less of the discharge of another order (regardless of that type of order), neither an admission nor a discharge are counted.
2. If a child is on multiple care and protection orders/ arrangements, all orders/ arrangements must be discharged before a discharge is counted.
3. If a child is admitted to, or discharged from, multiple care and protection orders/arrangements, the child is counted for only one admission and/or one discharge for the year.
4. The length of time continuously on an order is counted only for the first order/arrangement from which the child is discharged during the year.
5. If a child is discharged from an order and a new care and protection order/arrangement is applied in 5 days or less of the discharge, the orders are deemed to be consecutive (that is, the length of time on an order will include both orders).
6. Each child is counted for one admission for the year.

Population data

Population estimates or Estimated Residential Population (ERP) used in Child Protection Australia (CPA) are sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Following each Census, the ABS creates ERPs based on that Census. These include updated time series estimates for previous periods ('backcast') and forward periods ('projections'). The most up to date time series of ERPs from the ABS are used in all trend and rate calculations. CPA 2023–24 uses ERPs based on the 2021 Census, while previous reports use population estimates and projections based on the 2016 Census. This results in differences from data published in previous CPA reports. As such, data from the current CPA publication are not comparable with those from previous releases.

ERPs used to calculate rates are available in the [Supplementary data tables P1–P5 \(CPA 2023–24: Insights\)](#).

Box 1.1: Impacts on population estimates

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting Australian Government closure of the international border from 20 March 2020, caused significant disruptions to the usual Australian population trends. This report uses ERPs that reflect these disruptions.

In the year July 2020 to June 2021, the overall population growth was much smaller than the years prior, and in particular, there was a relatively large decline in the population of Victoria. ABS reporting indicates these were primarily due to net-negative international migration ([National, state and territory population | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)).

This change in usual population trends may result in some rates and proportions being greater than in previous years due to decreases in the denominator (population size) of some sub-populations.

2021 Census and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

ERPs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are sourced from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population projections produced by the ABS. Non-indigenous ERPs are derived by calculating the difference between the total population and the corresponding estimate from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population projections.

Rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in this report are not comparable to those in previous reports, due to a large increase in Census counts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples between 2016 and 2021. Less than half of this increase was due to demographic factors (births, deaths, migration). The remainder of this increase was due to other (non-demographic) factors, including changes in the propensity of people to identify as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.

For further information, see [Understanding change in counts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#) and [Guide to using historical estimates for comparative analysis and reporting](#).

Calculation of rates

This report uses both December and June population data, depending on the point of analysis (see [Points of analysis](#) below). December population data are used when calculating rates for during the year counts. June population data are used when calculating rates for 30 June counts.

Population rates are calculated by dividing the number of children for a specific measure or group (for example, children on care and protection orders) by the corresponding population. For example, the rates of children on care and protection orders at 30 June are calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of children aged 0–17 on care and protection orders at 30 June}}{\text{Estimated resident population of children aged 0–17 at June}} \times 1,000$$

Rate ratio

Rates can be compared using a rate ratio, which is one rate divided by another. Rate ratios should be interpreted with care where there are small denominators or where a large proportion of data is recorded as 'unknown'.

In *Child Protection Australia* reporting, rate ratios are mainly used to compare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous rates, and measure the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation. Rates are also presented to guide interpretation.

Rate ratios are not calculated where one or both of the rates have fewer than 5 children or young people in the numerator.

Age

Age is always calculated in whole years. For example, a child who was aged 5 years and 9 months is recorded as being aged 5.

Throughout *Child Protection Australia*, age is calculated at different points in time for a child, depending on the analysis in question:

- For 30 June analyses, age is calculated as at 30 June.
- For analyses of events occurring during the year, age is calculated at the relevant point in time during the year:
 - For analyses of children who were the subject of a child protection notification or substantiation, age is calculated at the earliest date of notification during the period.
 - For analyses of children who were admitted to, or discharged from, a care and protection order or an out-of-home care placement, age is calculated at the date of first admission and first discharge during the period.
- For analyses of children in contact with the child protection system, age is calculated at the earliest point of contact or at 1 July of the relevant reporting period if the child was on an ongoing care and protection order, or in an ongoing out-of-home care placement at the beginning of the period.

Average

Averages or means are calculated by summing all the values of interest and dividing by the total number of observations of interest. In *Child Protection Australia*, averages are used in the reporting of the average co-occurrence of abuse and neglect.

Identification of Indigenous status

Children

The practices used to identify and record the Indigenous status of children vary across states and territories. The quality of the data is therefore unknown.

In this collection, children are counted as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander if they are identified as such in the state and territory data collections. Where possible, children whose Indigenous status is recorded as 'unknown' are excluded from the calculations of rates and proportions. So, the counts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are likely to be an underestimate of the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

Caregivers

In the out-of-home care data collection, the Indigenous status of caregivers is collected. Carers who are identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are included in the Indigenous category for caregivers. In instances where there is no single caregiver, such as facility-based care, the caregiver will be recorded as Indigenous if the facility is specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and/or has Indigenous management. However, in *CPA: Insights* data table S5.12 children are not counted as living with Indigenous caregivers in Indigenous led facility-based care as this is not a preferred placement type under the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle](#). If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are living in other types of facility-based care, the caregiver is not counted as Indigenous.

Points of analysis

During the year

Each child is counted only once, even if a child had multiple occurrences of the event during the year.

For example, when calculating the number of children who were the subjects of substantiations of child protection notifications during the year, a child will be counted if a notification received during the financial year was substantiated. However, the child will only be counted once, regardless of how many notifications were substantiated for them in the financial year. Where details relating to the substantiation are reported (for example, type of abuse or neglect, or age of the child) the first substantiated notification is counted.

30 June (at the end of the financial year)

Counts of people at 30 June are calculated by counting each distinct person for whom the event of interest was ongoing at the end of the financial year. Each person is counted only once, even if that person had multiple occurrences of the event ongoing at 30 June.

In instances where a child or young person has multiple child protection orders ongoing at 30 June, the child or young person is counted against the national order type that represented the highest level of intervention.

In instances where a child or young person has multiple living arrangements ongoing at 30 June, the child or young person is counted against the living arrangement type that is considered their usual placement.

For example, when calculating the number of children and young people on a care and protection order at 30 June, a child or young person will be counted if they were on a care and protection order during the reporting period, and the order had not ended, or ended after 30 June. If the child or young person had an ongoing finalised guardianship order and an ongoing interim order at 30 June, they would be counted in the finalised guardianship order category, as this represents the higher level of intervention of the 2 orders.

Trends

Trends are reported as 5-year periods unless specified otherwise. Increases over time in the number or rate of children in the child protection system or children receiving support may relate to legislative changes, such as the expansion of the list of occupations that is mandated to report cases of suspected child maltreatment, or increases in public awareness from inquiries into child protection processes.

It is standard practice to present 5-year trends in data, as changes in state and territory legislation, policy/practice, and information management systems reduce the ability to accurately compare data over longer periods.

Changes that have an impact on the data are provided as caveats to the data, in the Technical notes, and in Appendices B–F.

Socioeconomic area

Child Protection Australia reporting uses the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), developed by the ABS to analyse socioeconomic status (ABS 2018).

The SEIFA comprises 4 indexes that are created using information from the Census of Population and Housing. These indexes are:

- the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage
- the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage
- the Index of Economic Resources
- the Index of Education and Occupation.

The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage is used to compare the average level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage. It is the SEIFA index used in this report, ranking geographical areas on a continuum from 'most disadvantaged' to 'least disadvantaged' using a combination of income, education, employment, occupation, housing, and other Census variables (ABS 2018).

The AIHW uses postcode data to match SEIFA information to child protection data and to calculate population quintiles. The population datasets used to calculate the quintiles for SEIFA were based on regional population data the ABS published in 2023 (ABS 2023b).

For more information on SEIFA refer to [Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(SEIFA\), Australia, 2021](#).

Remoteness area

Child Protection Australia reports use the Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness Structure developed by the ABS to analyse the remoteness of a child's usual place of residence at the time of notification, and the remoteness of a child's living arrangement (ABS 2021).

The AIHW uses SA2 or postcodes to match remoteness information to child protection data. These data include SA2 / postcode at notification and SA2 / postcode of living arrangement. Some SA2's and postcodes do not map to single Remoteness Areas. For these SA2's and postcodes, the data are weighted according to how the population is distributed across the SA2 / postcode and how this overlaps with the relevant Remoteness Area/s. Some children and young people might appear in remoteness areas for which there is no population within that state or territory. This is due to records whose SA2 / postcode is in a different state or territory to the one in which they received a notification, or were in out-of-home care.

For more information on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness Structure refer to [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3](#).

Reconnection explained

Figure 1 below provides an explanatory guide on how children are classified into the reconnection categories referred to in Table 10.9 of the [Child Protection Australia \(CPA\) 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children data tables](#).

Figure 1: Classification of reconnection categories for CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, data table 10.9

Second last placement	Last placement	Reconnected	Reconnected or stayed connected	Denominator for reconnected	Total
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin	✗	✓	✗	✓
	Not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin	✗	✗	✓	✓
	Unknown	✗	✗	✓	✓
Not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin	✗	✗	✓	✓
	Unknown	✗	✗	✓	✓
Unknown	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin	✗	✓	✗	✓
	Not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin	✗	✗	✓	✓
	Unknown	✗	✗	✓	✓

Please note that the proportion of children who are Reconnected is calculated using the Denominator for reconnected, while the proportion of children who are Reconnected or stayed connected is calculated using the Total. Children who are reconnected are counted in both the Reconnected and Reconnected or stayed connected categories. For more information see [CPA 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children technical specifications](#).

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2011) *Socio-economic indexes for areas: getting a handle on individual diversity within areas, September 2011*, ABS, accessed 12 April 2025

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2018) *Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2016*, ABS, accessed 12 April 2025.

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ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2023a) *National, state and territory population, Australia 2024*, ABS, accessed 12 April 2025.

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2023b) *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2021*, ABS, accessed 12 April 2025.



Glossary

For definitions of terminology used in this report refer to the AIHW's [child protection glossary](#).



Notes

Amendments

8 April 2026 – Minor updates have been made to method sections of Tables 10.11 and 10.19 in the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children technical specifications](#) to correct descriptions of CP NMDS data collections used in creation of the data tables.

Data quality statement

[Child Protection National Minimum Dataset, 2023–24; Data Quality Statement](#)

Data

Data tables: Child protection Australia 2023–24: Insights

Data

XLSX 995kB

Data tables: Child protection 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

Data

XLSX 283kB

Data tables: Safety of children in care 2023–24

Data

XLSX 149kB

Data tables: Permanency Outcomes Performance Framework (POPF) indicators and Pathways from out-of-home care 2023–24

Data

XLSX 241kB

Data tables: National Out-of-Home Care Standards indicators (NOOHCS) indicator 2023–24

Data

XLSX 218kB

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- Child protection Australia 2023–24 |
Web report | 27 Mar 2026
This release
- Child protection Australia 2022–23 |
Web report | 16 May 2025
- Child protection Australia 2021–22 |
Web report | 07 May 2024
- Child protection Australia 2020–21 |
Web report | 15 Jun 2022
- Child protection Australia 2019–20 |
Publication | 18 May 2021
- Child protection Australia 2018–19 |
Publication | 18 Mar 2020
- Child protection Australia 2017–18 |
Publication | 08 Mar 2019
- Child protection Australia 2016–17 |
Publication | 09 Mar 2018
- Child protection Australia 2015–16 |
Publication | 16 Mar 2017
- Child protection Australia 2014–15 |
Publication | 21 Apr 2016
- Child protection Australia 2013–14 |
Publication | 08 May 2015
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Publication | 08 Mar 2013
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Publication | 30 Jun 1997
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Publication | 01 Apr 1995
- Child abuse and neglect Australia 1993–94 |
Publication | 01 Aug 1995

- Child abuse and neglect Australia 1992-93 |
Publication | 01 Aug 1994
 - Child abuse and neglect Australia 1991-92 |
Publication | 01 Aug 1993
 - Child abuse and neglect Australia 1990-91 |
Publication | 01 Aug 1992
-



Related material

Resources

Child protection Australia 2023–24: Insights

Resource

This report provides an overview of children in the child protection system in 2023–24, including children subject to notifications, investigations, and substantiations of maltreatment, and the ways children were supported. Over the next 12 months, quarterly updates will be made to the web report to include content specifically focussing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the system, the safety of children in care, and pathways from out-of-home care.

PDF 806kB

Child protection Australia 2023–24: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Resource

This update presents data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system (released 30 September 2025).

PDF 951kB

Child protection Australia 2023–24: Safety of children in care

Resource

This report presents data on the safety and abuse of children in care. It includes the 'Safety of children in care' section of the web report.

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Child protection Australia 2023–24: Pathways from out-of-home care

Resource

This update presents data on children's pathways from out-of-home care. It includes the 'Pathways from out-of-home care' section of the web report.

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Appendices A to F: Child protection Australia 2023–24

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